The Indian Council for Cultural Relations was founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Education Minister of Independent India. Since then we have seen in India the consolidation of Indian democracy, the establishment of an equitable social order, the rapid development of Indian economy, the empowerment of Indian women, creation of a vibrant infrastructure of world-class educational institutions, and the powerful revitalization of scientific traditions. There has also been a revival, reiteration and renewal of the five-millennia old Indian culture, exemplified by the energetic projection, development and experimentation in the Indian arts, the confident and creative expansion of Indian languages, and the great energy in Indian cinema. The ICCR, in harmony with these developments, is in unison with contemporary India.

The last five decades have been one of the most exciting periods in the arts in India's long history. Indian literature, music and dance, Indian paintings, sculp ture and crafts, as well as Indian theatre and films, ha each witnessed great outbursts of creativity. ICC continues to encourage improvisation and experimen tation with the new, while it pays homage to the cla sical as well as the folk forms of India's cultural e: pression.

The ICCR is all about a communion of cultures, creative dialogue with other nations. To facilitate th interaction with world cultures, the Council has strive to articulate and demonstrate the diversity and ricl ness of the cultures of India, both in and with oth countries of the world.

The Council prides itself on being the pre-emine sponsor of cultural and intellectual exchanges betwe India and partner countries. It is the Council's resol to continue to symbolize India's great cultural ar educational efflorescence in the years to come.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Indian Horizons is one of ICCR's oldest magazines. It has completed half a century of publication a few years ago. During these five decades, we have continued to publish the magazine in its traditional format. It is imperative that "Indian Horizons" should reflect the technological milieu of modern India and keep in tune with the information revolution permeating the Indian landscape.

With this issue, the magazine comes to you in its new format and style. We shortly plan to introduce the magazine in the electronic format. Usefulness of any change can be measured only by the response of its readers. We look forward to receiving your comments on the new format of the magazine as also its contents. This will enable us to continue to evolve and improve with the changing times.

Rakesh Kumar
Director General, ICCR

EDITOR'S NOTE



Indian poetry, during the nationalist phase of our literature, tended to glorify the heroic past of India and aroused people to fight colonial aggression as well as feudal oppression, both of class and gender. In post Independence India, the recurrent themes were democratization and modernization. Every new generation brings in its wake fresh ideas and trends. The poetry of 90s continued to explore themes like social justice. A predominant strand of literature centered around gender issues and reflected the quest of modern Indian women for a transition from mere equality to empowerment. Women are increasingly engaged in discussing the roles, rights, responsibilities and aspirations of women as a political, economic and social class. This process has ushered in a very powerful literary movement, discernible in writings of young Indian women.

With a view to harness the creative genius of young Indian women, *In[illegible] Horizons* conducted a pan Indian poetry competition on the o[illegible]n of International Women's Day, open to women born over th[illegible] three decades. Several thousand entries were received. A[illegible] of judges comprising Dr. Aruna Sitesh, Dr. Sukrita Paul Kumar, [illegible]andira Ghosh and Dr. H K Kaul went through these poems in [illegible]tail. The prize-winning poems and some other poems which [illegible]d the unanimous appreciation of the jury, appear in this issue [illegible]*n Horizons*.

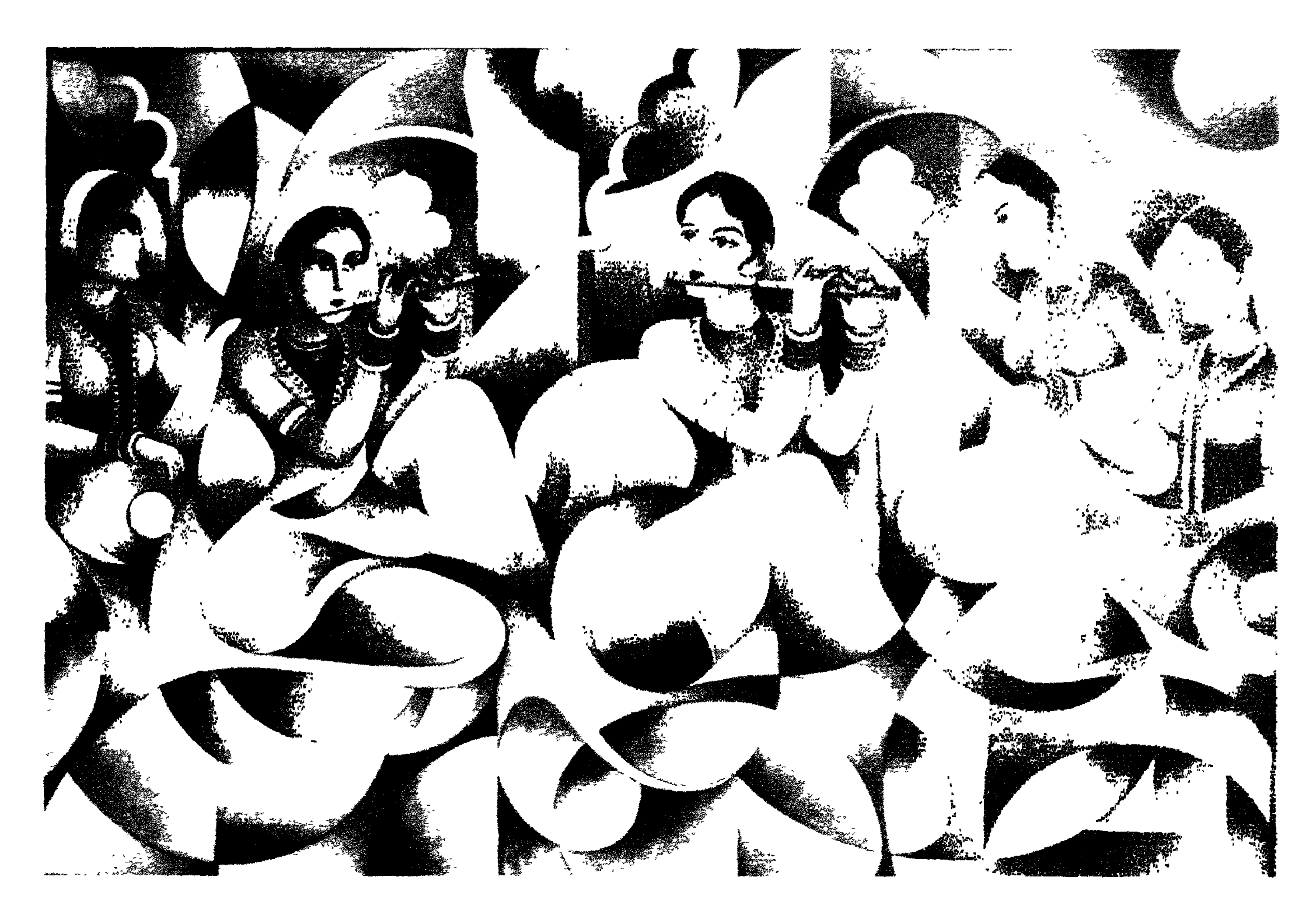
[illegible] is also a section of paintings by contemporary eminent Indian [illegible]n painters. In the issues to come, *Indian Horizons* will continue [illegible]lore other aspects of women's contribution to culture, education, [illegible]ure, music dance, theatre, cinema and media. We look forward [illegible]eiving the comments of our readers to this issue.

Dr. Madhup Mohta

Harish Rathi: Painting the Cultural Heritage of India

Shivani Gupta

The cultural heritage of India which perhaps goes back to more than 5,000 years, is among the very few in the world to have been affected by foreign invasions and domination and yet maintain its own identity. Indian culture has been able to inherit all that was good and ignore anything that could threaten or destroy its diversity and variety. The cultural heritage of our vast sub-continent is quite evident from ancient Indian art. Indian art under numerous influences changed and evolved with the evolution of our civilization that witnessed striking innovations in all areas of artistic expression.



Paintings flourished as an art form ever since the pre-historic age. This was evidently found on the walls of the cave dwellings of early man. The discovery of the paintings on the walls of Harappan civilization, cave paintings of Ajanta, Ellora, Bagh and Sittanvasal, wall paintings in Tanjore temples and Kalamkari art forms in the Vidharba temples are examples of rich Indian heritage. Painting, like any other art form, used gods, legends, folklore and nature as their subjects.

In India, no school of painting was practically encouraged under the reign of early Mughal emperors as Islam condemned paintings and the Quran forbids the protrayal of nature in any form of art. However, it was the emperor Akbar who first laid the foundation of the Mughal School of Painting in India. The Mughal School of art blended the Persian style with the Hindu style. The Golden Age of the Mughal paintings was evidently during the reign of the Mughal emperor Jehangir, which evolved as a rare combination of Persian, Hindu and Western traditions. It was during his reign that the art of portraits flourished. He encouraged the portraits of both himself and his subjects. The idea of mounting the pictures with margins and decorations got momentum during this period itself. It was after Aurangzeb, that Mughal Art was totally neglected and eventually collapsed.

During this era, the Rajput artists from Rajasthan adopted Mughal art forms and transformed it slowly into their own style. The popular subjects of these Rajput artists were the love scenes of Krishna and Radha with extreme refinement.

However, during the British rule in India, Indian art declined overall as the artists were forced to adopt a more western style in paintings so as to satisfy the tastes of the British. Unable to find patrons, these artists surrendered to the whims and fancies of the West-

ern style of painting. It was then that Rabindranath Tagore revolted against such impositions in the field of art and founded the Shantiniketan School of Art.

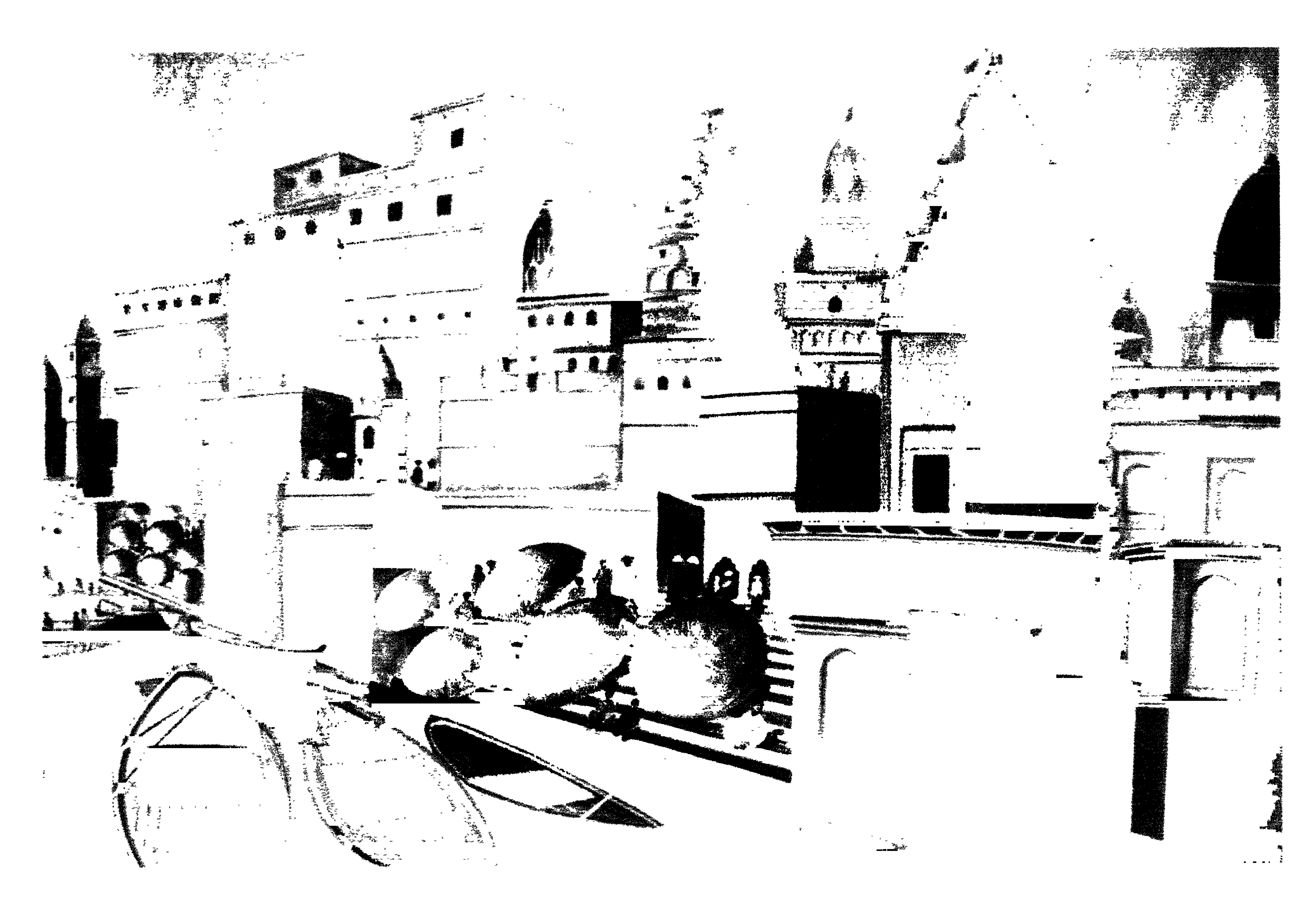
Independent India however, saw Indian art achieving great heights of glory under the foundation of the progressive Artists club in Bombay. Eminent names in the field of paintings like M F Hussain, F N Souza, K H Ara, S K Bakre were among the few to become active members of this club.

The last decade witnessed the amalgamation of styles and techniques from all across the world. This art form came to be called as Modern Art. The highlight of this art form has been the usage of the most vibrant and striking colours that could catch the immediate attention of onlookers. In recent years, a new generation of young artists has come up. These young artists, by their extreme hard work and willingness to merge western idea with Indian thoughts are all set to make their presence felt all across the world through the creation of masterpieces.

These artists believe that the language paintings speak of the complete emotional and psychological journey of an artist. It is through this medium that an artist gives life to his conscious and subconscious view of the world and its countless aspects and concerns. An artist also learns a lot of things from nature and experiences its creation into a whole. This path of self-awareness and understanding, combined with technical finesse, takes an artist to the finer level of intellectual brevity and artistic economy.

Harish Rathi, an artist of the modern genre, seems to be confidently travelling through this, giving way to the creation of a unique artistic language. His works are definitely growing with each experience of his life. Born in 1973, Harish Rathi was interested in art and paintings since childhood. His early achievements included a second prize in Ritu Kohli's on-the-spot painting competition in 1991 followed by the first prize in the next year. He went ahead to acquire a diploma in fine arts from Sarada Ukil School of Art, Delhi in 1995 and later





a diploma in commercial arts from the same.

At the same time, he participated in the painting workshop for children by Sahitya Kala Parishad in 1996 as an asstistant art director.

His earlier works essentially landed him in the league of landscape artists with most of his best works done in either oil or water colours. He has been among the very few artists from India in recent times who have successfully been able to highlight the majesty and grandeur of nature to its fullest. Earlier, landscapes were not painted separately. Rather, they formed a backdrop of the main theme of the paintings. Following the footsteps of several legends in this field, Rathi understood the value of landscape painting. Indian places and monuments also caught his fancy. These highlighted the richness of Indian culture. The magnificence and grandeur of these places and monuments inspired him to depict the diversity, colour and spontaneity of India and represent it as a form of an all-encompassing cultural heritage in his works. His charcoal figurative drawings series on Benaras and Vrindavan *ghats* speak volumes for his work. His works have evolved over the years to become a fusion of various traditions which influenced them. His art form is essentially vivid and lively, refined and sophisticated and bold and vigorous at the same time.

Later, the desire to do something different from the earlier works and the need to keep with the modern trend drove Rathi into the field of Abstraction. His paintings features spiral and curvaceous lines, arches and domes, grand monuments, huge *havelis* and their gates, life around water bodies, figures of gods and goddesses, divinity that forms the portrayal of virility and vivacity which is both refined and sophisticated, bold and robust, the most appealing attribute of his art being versatility of line and form and use of colours and compositions. The beauty of his expression inspire wonder, enchantment and pleasure and reveal aspects of both human and supernatural divine subjects.

The *ragas* of classical Indian music have been a great inspiration for Rathi's work. Lord Ganesha being significant amongst the gods and goddesses in Hindu mythology, acquires a high stature in his paintings. His love for music is evidently portrayed in his paintings which depict Ganesha as playing various musical instruments like the sitar, flute and drums—all these have a magical impact on the onlookers. The depiction of Ganesha in various forms or *avtaars* as in Panchmukhi Ganesha Vishnu avtaar Ganesha and in a dancing pose, derive their influence from Indian mythology in these paintings.

Even Lord Krishna and his divine beloved Radha, engaged in Rasleela, have been one of his favorite themes. His works dwell upon the different aspects of Krishna's personality as an incarnation, as a child God and youth playing with friends, a saviour and an amorous lover. Krishna, in his works is depicted as *Ghan*[illegible] (dark a[illegible] cloud), with his b[illegible] Radha [illegible] several poses. Rathi [illegible] Krishna [illegible] his human aspects [illegible] a comp[illegible] series of his painting [illegible] devoted to [illegible] Krishna mythology [illegible] is my[illegible] *leelas* (play-le[illegible] [illegible] Krishna's childh[illegible] [illegible] pain[illegible] showed the divini[illegible] human[illegible] the absolute inn[illegible] of the [illegible] Various attempts [illegible] demon Kansa to kill th[illegible] through enchantress Pu[illegible] [illegible]ock-de[illegible] Vakasura, the gr[illegible] Kaliya [illegible] so on, finally r[illegible] in Kri[illegible] killing each, ha[illegible] together [illegible] portrayed. These [illegible]lowed b[illegible] play acts of Kri[illegible] his fri[illegible] The most enticin[illegible] [illegible] the depiction of [illegible] dance [illegible] the *gopis*, as a g[illegible] with K[illegible] in particular. Ra[illegible] representat[illegible] *gopis* with Kri[illegible] symboliz[illegible] intimate relationship between God and the devotees, where the music flowing from Krishna's flute symbolizes the call of the Divine, thereby giving an invitation to all the creatures to join God in eternal bliss. The paintings depicting the affair of Krishna with Radha heightens the bond between the human soul and the Divine.

The life of Gautam Buddha also occupies an important position in Rathi's collection of paintings. In keeping with Buddhist mythology, Gautam Buddha is represented as superior to the various divine figures of Hindu mythology such as Yakshas, Nagas, etc. and also to Indra and Brahma. These paintings have an underlying idea that everything associated with Buddha is beyond every sphere of experience. The Buddhist paintings feature a canvas-full of Buddhist images of Gautam Buddha and his follower monks in gorgeous colours which makes them valuable because of their mystic beauty. Rathi's works are able to make Buddha appear holier because of the effect of the colours. There are also representations



of sacred trees, stupas and other motifs to indicate the presence of Gautam Buddha symbolically.

At first sight, the works of Harish Rathi appear as a collection of rural settings dominated by the presence of masculine and feminine figures. Yet these scenes present the vision of the artist that suitably provides the basis of Indian music and art forms. Most of these masterly works are visual creations of concepts that depict *ragas* or musical modes of Indian classical music.

Probably no artist in India has loved the rich heritage of culture of the Indian Subcontinent as he did in recent times. No one has been able to point and paint the dignity and magnificence of Indian culture as he has. His works are a perfect blend of ethnic and modern art forms. Though some may feel that his figures are sometimes not clearly etched in his works, yet despite this lapse, one must acknowledge that rarely has any artist studied Indian culture with such a unique and clear point of view. His works depict simple and easily related backdrops before which human or divine figures are clearly etched out.



The harmony in his pictures be it landscapes, human representations, divinity or representation of relationships-are all further accentuated by his proficient tonal norms which successfully places and emphasizes the creative and visual intensity of his paintings. In his earlier works, though his colour palette was playing with the right colours but in his present creations, one notices a greater experimentation with colours as well as depths emphasizing both bright, bold and flat colours and also a more striking colour scheme in some. The vibrancy of his works is further accentuated by the use of water colours and acrylic paints. But due to the long lasting effect of oil as a medium, Rathi prefers it to the others. However Rathi gives more importance to his ideas and their implementation rather than the medium.

His works have won appreciation in the form of exhibitions held at Kala Mela in 1994, German Embassy, New Delhi in 2001, Visual Art Gallery 2002, Hotel Intercontinental, Delhi in 2003 and Handicrafts Exhibition, Germany in 2002, and more recently at the PBC Art Gallery, Delhi in 2004. Besides, he has attended a number of camps, workshops and seminars to uplift the field of art. His collection of works are prestigiously owned by Sarada Ukil Schol of Art, Delhi, Lalit Kala Akademy, Hotel Le-Meriden, Delhi, C.M. House (H.P.), Times of India Group, Hindustan Times, The Ministry of External Affairs, Embassies of Qatar,



Hungary, Hotel Inter[illegible]national, [illegible] Germany, Kenya, S[illegible] Lor[illegible] and many more coll[illegible] in India [illegible] abroad.

Recently, Ra[illegible] a new [illegible] of 12 paintings [illegible] ICCR annual cale[illegible] the [illegible] of these painting[illegible] Folk [illegible] atre Forms of Ind[illegible] under[illegible] idea being that In[illegible] its mu[illegible] cultures spreadi[illegible] million [illegible] people and thou[illegible] kilom[illegible] offer a rich spect[illegible] perform[illegible] arts all across, w[illegible] perhaps [illegible] in any other par[illegible] world. K[illegible] variously as the [illegible] perfo[illegible] mainly in Cha[illegible] and M[illegible] Pradesh, it narra[illegible] from [illegible] epic *Mahabhar*[illegible] [illegible] with wit and satire from Maharashtra; *Natua Naach* involving all male groups from Bihar and Jharkhand; *Khayal* from Rajasthan; *Shahi Jatra* of Orissa, Bengal and Eastern Bihar; *Nautanki* from Uttar Pradesh; *Bhavai* from Gujarat and *Therukoothu* from Tamil Nadu. All these paintings invariably match with their themes and through the portrayal of bright and vibrant colours, paricipate with the folk theatre in the process of linking the past with the future.

Presently, working for the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Rathi is emphasizing on the lines of prominent artists like K K Hebbar, Jatin Das, and M F Hussain. His works will depict a series on feminine figures in various dance *mudras* and musical instruments from ancient Indian culture.

An ardent lover of every form of Indian art, whether nature or religion or life-style, Harish Rathi truly emphasizes on the charm of an era gone past. He beautifully blends the architectural beauty, the features of women, the grandeur and splendour of those times with the pastoral scenes in his magnificent paintings. His paintings have now acquired a stature of their own. He belongs to the genre of contemporary artists who have been able to keep up to the times and excel in their modern works, giving absolute freedom of expression to his ideas, imagination and artistic liberty.

■

The Travails of Philanthropy in India

Delivered at the Maulana Azad Memorial Lecture on March 29, 2004, by *Narayana N.R. Murthy,* Chairman of the Board, Infosys Technologies Limited, Bangalore, India

I feel honoured to deliver the Maulana Azad Memorial Lecture. I thank the organizers for this opportunity. To speak in memory of Maulana Azad is to pay homage to a visionary. He was a scholar of great intellectual ability. To borrow the words of Shri Vajpayee: *He was a great (leader) of Modern India.* He represented the lofty vision of freedom from colonial domination. *Freedom*, as Albert Camus has so rightly said, *is nothing else but a chance to be better.* Surely, Maulana Azad would have wanted to see tremendous progress in India. It is appropriate, therefore, that we ask ourselves a few important questions today.

Has India made sufficient progress since independence? Can we be happy about this progress? Have we kept pace with the rest of the world? Have we achieved progress that is sustainable? Can we dream of an India where poverty, ill health and ignorance will have vanished?

Let us analyze where India stands today. The social indicators have improved in the past few decades-the proportion of population below the poverty line declined from 45% in the early 80's to 26% in 2000; the literacy rate increased from 43% of population in 1980 to 65% in 2001.

However, we still have a long way to go. 5% of the population does not have access to essential drugs; 69% still does not have access to adequate sanitation. Life expectancy is only 62 years as compared to 77 years for the US. 47% of the children are under-weight, as compared to 10% in China. 193 among 100,000 people are afflicted with malaria, as compared to 40 in neighboring Bangladesh. We are ranked 124 on the Human Development Index (out of 173 nations).

Clearly, much needs to be done to improve the condition of the vast majority of our people. I am reminded of the words of George Bernard Shaw: *The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them. That's the essence of inhumanity.*

There are a number of philanthropic organizations in the country that fight against this inhumanity. In fact, there are over two million NGOs and development groups in India. However, as Harvard professors Michael Porter and Mark Karmer say: *Concerted effort, through secular charitable foundations has to go well beyond the gifts of private donors. They should achieve a social impact disproportionate to their spending.* Unfortunately, Indian philanthropic effort is yet to achieve such a social impact. Now, I will talk about some of the challenges.

India is a vast geographic area, divided into numerous cultures and languages. Over 700 million Indians live in the rural areas. Of these, around 190 million live below the poverty line. In fact, India has the largest number of poor people in the world. In addition, 84% of our illiterates are in the villages. The diversity and the magnitude of the problem creates huge challenges.

At the same time, our philanthropic organizations are disorganized and lack effective channels for communication and resource sharing. There is no credible directory of organizations within India; their is no widespread platform to share best practices; and there is no public effort to collect knowledge and insight. The disorganized reporting practices limit our ability to accurately track activities across the nation. The inability to record observations and transfer knowledge limits efficiency. Every information seeker has to independently verify information, usually with multiple visits.

I am reminded of an experience at the Infosys Foundation. As you know, the Foundation conducts a number of philanthropic activities. Starting libraries for village children is part of this. On one occasion, a man approached the Foundation and attempted to sell his books to it. He claimed to be a close personal friend of the Foundation's chairperson. What he did not realize was that he was talking to the chairperson herself!

A major challenge of philanthropy in India is the misuse of funds leading to lack of credibility. People are worried that the money they donate may not be accounted for. Consequently, they tend to be skeptical of philanthropic organizations.

Skepticism has led to apathy. Consequently, we have not developed a culture of "giving". In a survey of philanthropy in Asian countries, it was found that high-income Indians give less

than their Indonesian, Thai and Philippino counterparts. Indians are found to give only 1.7% of our household income to philanthropic efforts; in comparison, Indonesians give almost 6%. Apathy in solving community matters has held us back from making progress, which is otherwise within our reach. We have to remember that fundamental social problems grow out of a lack of commitment to the common good.

In India, for many decades after independence, it was believed that social issues relating to the public good are the responsibility of the government alone. Our rigid central planning system and our "hangover" from the days of colonial domination contributed to this mindset. Consequently, there was insufficient partnership between philanthropic organizations, government and private corporations. During the past decade, we have witnessed a slow change in this mindset. We have also witnessed increased activity in corporate philanthropy. For instance, according to a study of Indian companies by IMRB (Indian Market Research Bureau), as many as 83% of the surveyed companies considered social responsibility as an integral part of business.

Internationally, private-public partnerships involving governments, the private sector and civil society are increasingly recognized as important to tackle social issues-from building health care to bridging the digital divide. The Global Health Alliance forged by Rotary International, the United Nations, private sector corporations and governments is an example of such partnerships. In addition, it helps create innovative solutions for society's needs, leveraging the expertise of the private section. The invention of the simputer in India is an example of such innovation. Finally, such partnerships can also ensure a steady flow of income to philanthropic organizations.

Bureaucratic delays are a major cause for concern. In one such instance, a philanthropic organization was constructing a hospital for the poor. During the course of this, it encountered many situations where clearances were required. Rather than initiate speedy clearances, the bureaucrats used redtapism to delay the project's completion by two years! To quote Robert Schaeberle: *If we can ever make red tape nutritional, we can feed the world!*

Today, India is at the cusp of a revolution in economic growth. As a progressive nation, we have to focus on both the creation of wealth (entrepreneurship) and the reconstitution of wealth (philanthropy). Philanthropy is part of the implicit social contract that nurtures and revitalizes economic prosperity. Much of the new wealth created has to be given back to the community in order to nurture future economic growth. This is the only way we can create hope for the large majority of our poor. As Robert Kennedy so rightly said: *Each time a man stands up to improve the lot of others....., he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.* There is no more opportune time for us than now to create a multitude of such ripples.

Today, thanks to liberalization and subsequent growth, a large number of Indians have the capacity to contribute. Wealth invested back into society expands opportunity for a larger section of society. Thus, we create an upward spiral of wealth and prosperity. This is at the core of social success in countries like the US.

In promoting philanthropic activity, we have to focus on both the supply side of philanthropy (donor side) as well as the demand (recipient) side. On the supply side or the donor side, many of our voluntary organizations have the capacity to solve problems, but have little or no money with which to implement these solutions. On the other hand, many of those that have the financial resources hardly have the time, or the focus to sustain programs that cater to society's demands. How can we ensure increased participation in charitable activities as well as improve the effectiveness of our philanthropic effort? I will talk about some of the steps that we can take.

The need of the hour is to enthuse a large section of our affluent population to become active participants in philanthropy. According to a survey by Independent Sector, a coalition of philanthropic organizations in the US, over 80% of US households donate to charitable causes. 83 million American adults are involved in voluntary activities, representing the equivalent of over 9 million full-time employees at a value of $239 billion! Philanthropy has allowed the country to tackle its social problems. The idea that wealth entails responsibility goes deep in their society. In 2000, American philanthropic contributions accounted for almost 2% of their national income. There are similar signs of increased philanthropic activity in Latin America, Spain and Russia, just to name a few countries.

Similarly, contributions from individuals have tremendous potential in India. However, most of it is contributed to religious organizations. In fact, this accounts for around 35% of donations made by Indians. Further, a majority of voluntary organizations in India lack the skills and the methodology for tapping this very important source of funds. Owing to a lack of transparency and accountability, many voluntary organizations suffer from serious crises of credibility. This often deters individuals from contributing for welfare or developmental projects.

The idea of professional foundations in the US underpins today's philanthropic work there. Indian philanthropic groups should spearhead the evolution of philanthropy from private acts of conscience into a professional field. They should meet their obligations to create value. The need of the hour is to bring entrepreneurial acumen to philanthropy, demanding measurable results, and carefully assessing social investments.

Remember that public trust is the single most important asset of the philanthropic community. Without it, donors will not give and volunteers will not get involved. This implies accountability to the public and to the charitable intent of the donors. Program evaluation, focus on results, and even impact studies to measure the effectiveness of social investments are part of this. Independent sector in the US outlines a series of steps the philanthropic and non-profit sector must take to ensure accountability. We need a similar code in India.

The other aspect of accountability is to measure the results. The goal is superior performance in a chosen area. A philanthropic organization should measure its success by the social impact of its work. This includes tracking various metrics such as amount raised, membership growth, people served, overhead costs and social benefits reaped.

Comprehensive and accurate information about philanthropic organizations must be made accessible in ways that donors and other stakeholders find useful. In India, the information availability for many of our philanthropic groups is woefully inadequate for analyzing performance. The Internet can provide instant access to financial and performance data. This can enable thorough evaluations of philanthropic groups. Further, this will help in comparing with other groups in the same sector or geography. Most importantly, it will ensure that philanthropic organizations operate in a competitive environment to attract funds.

Philanthropic organizations should have a clearly defined and articulated strategy. This requires setting program objectives and planning for susceptibility. Accordingly, they have to focus on a few important areas after making an assessment of the organization's opportunities, strengths and weaknesses. For instance, the Infosys Foundation has decided to focus on a few areas such as learning and education, social rehabilitation, rural upliftment and promotion of the arts. Improved performance also requires lowering the cost of administration and investing in more effective strategies for social change.

In India, the Internet has the potential to transform social service initiatives. It can help network social work activities across the country. For instance, it can bring together all organizations, donors, etc. Further, there is a need to build an Internet platform to bridge the gap between the resources and the needy communities. Resource Link, promoted by Hewlett Packard, and Aidmatrix, promoted by i2 Technologies, are examples of this. Both pair food suppliers that have surplus food or products for donation, with certified charitable organizations that can use the goods. Another example in the global context is the networkforgood.org managed by AOL, Yahoo and Cisco Systems. However, the Internet has not been harnessed fully in India.

Today, the role of a donor in India is slowly graduating from a "giver" (of funds) to an investor in social change. However, change cannot be obtained through mere charity alone. Charity is important and necessary, but it only soothes. We must move from charitable care to developmental assistance. Consequently, we should focus on empowerment and developmental assistance. In the words of the 12th century Jewish philosopher, Maimonides: *Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.* Providing micro-credit in rural areas is an instance of this. I believe that this has tremendous potential to provide scalable solutions for tackling poverty in rural areas. In addition, we have to leverage technology for microfinance. For instance, HP is now testing a Remote Transactioning System (RTS), which will serve to create virtual branches of Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) in remote villages.

Philanthropy and volunteerism have long been an integral part of Indian society. The concept of *Daana* goes back to the Vedic period. We must now regain those days of social activism. This battle must be fought with all our resources, collectively and in partnership. Remember the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: *To know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived; this is to have succeeded.* Today, I present for your consideration an issue that must be addressed by the conscience of our society.

I don't know what the future may hold, but I know who holds the future: said Raiph Abernathy. We, the privileged few who enjoyed the fruits of India's growth, hold the future. If we fail to act today, we are at the risk of endangering the well-being of generations to come. I am reminded of a quote by German martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.* I am confident that people from all sectors- the government, civil society and business will take responsible action. This is the only way we can overcome the travails of philanthropy in India.

Thank you.

■



MURAL PAINTINGS OF INDIA

BENOY K BEHL

India has one of the finest traditions of ancient paintings in the world. Unfortunately, the great Indian murals are in dark recesses in ancient temples and caves and have not been clearly photographed or seen by many. Owing to this, very few have been aware of the fact that Indian paintings are one of the finest treasures of the artistic heritage of the world.

Since very early times, a very high degree of technical excellence was achieved and the art, born out of the deep philosophy of the land, was graceful and sublime.

The earliest surviving paintings in the Indian sub-continent are those of Ajanta. The paintings here were made in two phases. The oldest paintings date to around the 2nd century BC. The marvellous later phase of the Ajanta paintings was around the 5th century AD, under the patronage of the Vakatakas who ruled the Deccan.

The subjects are scenes from the life of the Buddha and the *Jatakas:* stories of his previous births. These paintings bring to us great beauty of form, with extremely fine rendering which imparts a sense of volume and roundedness. Yet, amidst the tender and elegant beauty of the world, these paintings constantly take us to that which is within. The great *Bodhisattvas* (Seekers of Truth) who are painted upon the walls of Ajanta, always look within. It is this life of the spirit which pervades the entire world of these paintings.

Ajanta is known to be the fountainhead and inspiration of Buddhist paintings across the whole of Asia.

The sophisticated ancient tradition of painting which was inherited by the artists of Ajanta, was documented as the *Chitrasutra* of the *Vishnudharmottara Purana.* This was a verbal tradition which would have come over many centuries, passed on through guilds of painters. It was penned on paper by perhaps the 5th or 6th century AD. This ancient treatise places a sophisticated grammar in the hands of the painter. However, he is informed that rules do not make the painting. It has to be given a life of its own by the painter.

Contrary to what is generally known, there are many remnants of ancient paintings found in all corners of the Indian Subcontinent, belonging to practically every century of the last 1500 years and more. These display the fact of a great and unified tradition of painting in ancient India.

There are fragments of paintings of the time of Ajanta which survive at many Buddhist cave sites, including Pitalkhora near Ellora, in Maharashtra.

Nine caves were excavated on the slopes of the Vindhya hills above the Bagh River during the reign of the Guptas, between the 4th and 6th centuries AD. Unfortunately, the paintings on the walls of these caves have been practically lost to the ravages of time. Reproductions of earlier times show that, as at Ajanta, the Buddhist paintings of Bagh present a sense of stillness. There is all the activity of life and yet a profound sense of peace upon the faces of the painted figures.

Very little of the paintings survive in the 6th century Hindu caves of Badami in Karnataka. As at Bagh, what remains evokes the magic of a world of painted splendour, when all the walls and ceilings were covered with murals.

In the meantime, in the 7th century, the Pallava kings of Tamil Nadu, gave exuberant and glorious expression to themes of Lord Shiva in paintings in the temples of Panamalai and Kailashnath in Kanchipuram.

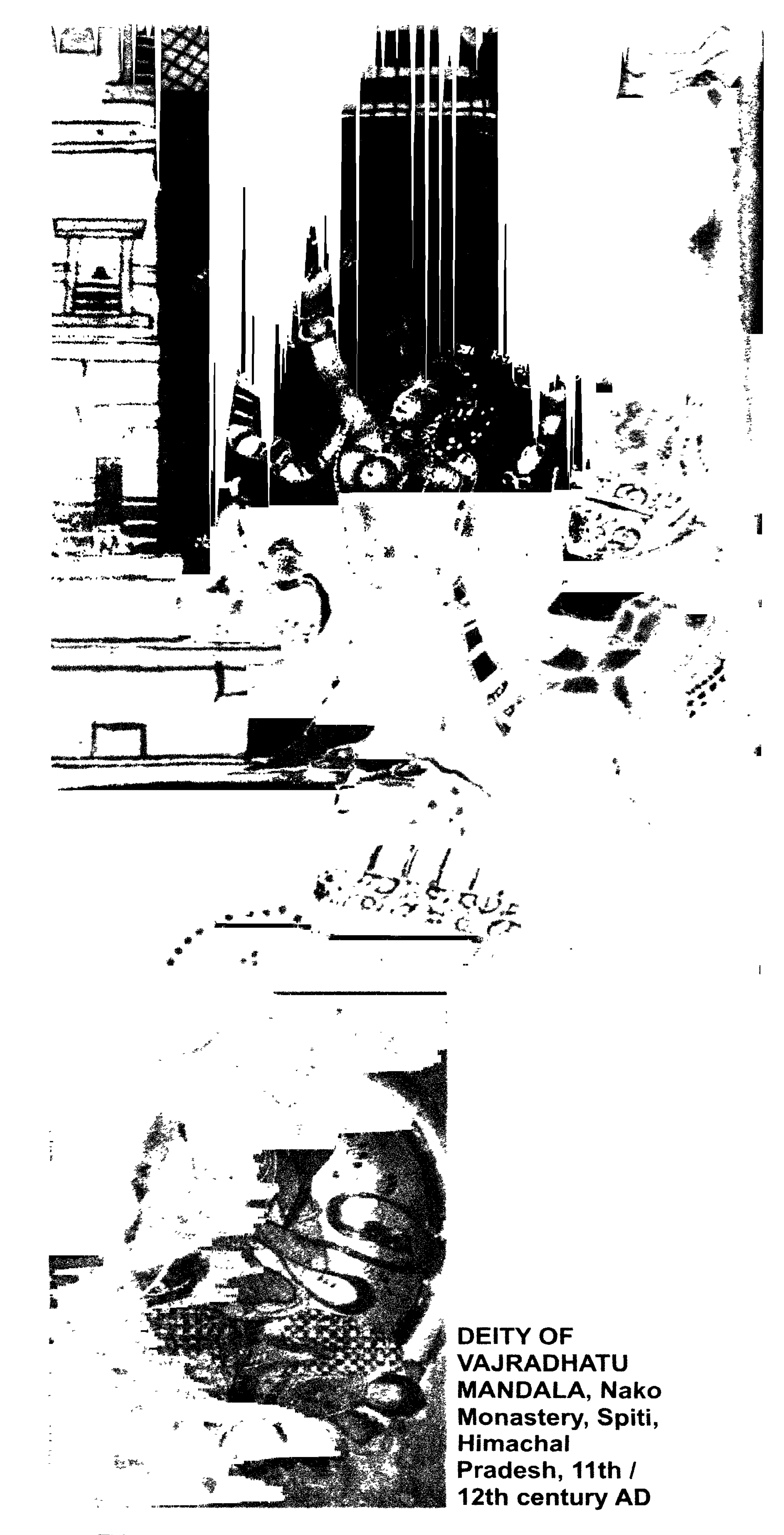
The walls of the niches in the outer ambulatory path of the Kailashnath temple were once covered with paintings in brilliant colours. Traces of these are still discernible.

In these paintings, we see the beginnings of a sense of imperial grandeur represented through art, in the emphasis on the depiction of lavish crowns and jewellery.

In the 9th century Jain cave of Sittannavasal in Tamil Nadu, is a marvellous lotus pond painted on the ceiling. It is a scene of the faithful gathering lotuses to place upon the resting place of a *Tirthankara*, a Jain saint. Elephants, buffaloes, geese and fish frolic in the waters which are overflowing with beautiful lotuses. The painter has used the occasion to present a joyous world. He brings to us a sense of sublime happiness: as fish swim in the waters, an elephant appears to smile, and gentlemen gather lotuses larger than themselves.

In the meantime, the magnificent Kailashnath temple had been hewn out of a mountain at Ellora in the 8th century. The walls and ceilings of this temple were once covered with murals. Fragments of these which remain, show the beauty and quality of the art.

There are also paintings of the late 9th century in the Jain caves at Ellora. The painters here continue the older tradition but with contributions of their own. Besides the naturalism and grace inherited from Ajanta, the figures painted here are stylised and elongated. These are significant changes which, in later years, are reflected in paintings over the whole of India.



DEITY OF VAJRADHATU MANDALA, Nako Monastery, Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, 11th / 12th century AD

This was among the 108 monasteries made across Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur and Western Tibet. These monasteries provide us a valuable glimpse of the early Vajrayana Buddhism, which spread from Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh.

TEMPLE DANCER, Alchi, Ladakh, 11th century
108 monasteries were made in the 11th century, across Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur and Western Tibet. These were decorated and painted by Kashmiri artists who were invited for the purpose. These paintings are the foundations of all later Buddhist art to follow in that region and they are among the finest art of India. We see here the pan-Indian medieval idiom of painting, including features such as the protruding farther eye.

GODDESS TARA, Alchi, Ladakh, 11th century
The beautiful paintings of Alchi depict a fine blending of the tradition of Indian painting with rich cultural influences which were present on the trade routes at that time. The exuberantly painted textiles seen here are remarkable.



In the heart of the Brhadisvara temple at Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, protected by massive walls of stone, are the finest paintings of the theme of Lord Shiva ever painted. Towards the end of the 10th century, King Rajaraja Chola expressed his devotion and also his power and grandeur, by commissioning murals on a spectacular scale.

The colours in the paintings are soft and subdued, the lines firm and sinuous and the expressions are true to life. More than ever before, we see the artists' lavish use of embellishments of crowns and jewellery, portraying the royal splendour of the times.

At an altitude of over ten thousand feet the barren desert plateau of Ladakh is a fascinating crucible of cultures. In days gone by, this was not an isolated place, it was an active crossroads of trade in the ancient world.

In the 11th century, King Yeshe Od of Guge built 108 monasteries across his kingdom in Ladakh, Western Tibet, Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti. Craftsmen and artists from Kashmir were invited by Yeshe Od and they constructed and painted these monasteries which were to become the backbone of Trans-Himalayan Buddhism.

The philosophy of Vajrayana Buddhism offers a new path towards attaining enlightenment. The worshipper meditates upon images of the deity and, by absorbing the qualities personified in the image, he becomes the deity himself. Thus, paintings are extremely important for Vajrayana Buddhists as an essential part of religious practice.

The monastery of Alchi is an oasis of beauty and colour in the midst of the vast and barren landscape of Ladakh. The *dhoti* of an Avalokitesvara statue in the three-storied temple of Alchi has some of the most gorgeous paintings. These are the only surviving visual representations of the culture and architecture of ancient Kashmir.

One of the masterpieces of the Alchi paintings is the Green Tara. We see here the marvellous shaping of the form with skilful shading. There is also the depiction of the protruding farther eye which extends beyond the line of the face. This is a convention in Indian painting, which was first seen in the murals of Ellora.

The Kashmiri artists present a lively world, with the grace and beauty of form coming to them from the classic Indian tradition. The rich textiles and decorative elements of these paintings are remarkable and they show that the artists had assimilated the traditions coming to them from Gandhara and Central Asia.

The Kashmiri style was mainly responsible for the lovely wall paintings still seen in the beautiful monasteries at Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda in Ladakh, in Tabo monastery



VENUGOPALA, Mattancheri Palace, Kochi, Kerala, 16th century
The mural paintings of Kerala are among the finest made in India. We see here the continuation of the tradition of exquisite shading and rendering of form, coming from Ajanta. While the Bodhisattvas of Ajanta were airy, ethereal beings, the Gods here are deeply comforting and paternal, in their majesty and ample volume.

in the Spiti valley and in Nako monsatery in Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh.

On the western edge of the Trans-Himalayan plateau, in Spiti, is the monastery complex of Tabo. This appears to be one of the first among the 108 monasteries built by Yeshe Od. It is dated around 996 AD.

The paintings here show close similarity to Alchi. The sinuous and even exaggerated body forms and the supple lines show a form of painting which is uniquely Kashmiri.

The monastery of Nako, in the Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, comprises four temples within an enclosure of mud walls. The wall paintings at Nako display a considerable delicacy of execution and an inner grace.

The traditions of Vajrayana Buddhist paintings which were laid at the time of the grand conception of King Yeshe Od's 108 monasteries, continued in the centuries to come. From Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the East, across the highest mountains of the world, is the one region which has an unbroken tradition of Indian mural paintings.

Deep in the heart of the plains, in the Lalitpur District of Uttar Pradesh, stand the Shiva and Vishnu temples which are known as the Kacheris. The Choti Kacheri has on the ceiling the remains of exquisite paintings of the 13th century. These are extremely valuable as, after the fragmentary remains at Nalanda and Satdhara, these are the oldest surviving paintings of the Northern Plains in India.

After the 11th century, the art of painting came to prominence again during the rule of the Vijayanagar kings from the 14th century onwards. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Hampi and other sites, we see fine examples of mural paintings.

The ceiling of the Virupaksha Temple at Hampi is covered with paintings of the 15th century. There is simplicity and vigour in the style of the paintings. A sense of movement and energy is caught in the painted figures.

In these paintings, there is a deep intertwining of the story of the Vijayanagar Empire and its kings with the stories of the Gods they believed in. There is also a painting of the procession of the revered sage Vidyaranya, who was the spiritual mentor of the founders of the Vijayanagar Empire.

The temple at Lepakshi was made in the 16th century by the Nayaka brothers, Virupanna and Viranna, at a centre of trade and pilgrimage in the Vijayanagar Empire. The paintings on the ceiling of the *mandapa* here are some of the finest mural paintings of the medieval period in India.

Lepakshi presents the richness and colour of a great cosmopolitan society. It presents one of the great moments in Indian painting. There is a sense of liveliness here which is enhanced by the depiction of the protruding eye. The liveliness is also conveyed by angular features and by the peaked corners of clothes.

Legends associated with Shiva and Parvati, Krishna and Rama were painted on the walls of palaces and temples in Kerala from the 16th to the 19th century.

There is a new sense of power and majesty which we see in the painted gods of Kerala. The manner of shading to depict volume reminds us of Ajanta and Alchi. Each figure here is larger than life. Their limbs are strong and their bodies are full and firm. The gods painted here are proud, vigorous and protective. The idiom of Kerala is unique. Its close

relationship to the ancient dance dramas of the land are seen in the elaborate headgear and heavy forms.

In the 16th century, under the Mughal Emperor Akbar, the art of painting was revived in Northern India after many centuries. The finest miniatures were made in the court of Akbar and the emperors who succeeded him. At Fatehpur Sikri, the capital city built by Akbar, we have the remnants of mural paintings. These are fine paintings and very similar to the miniatures of that period. There are representations of busy market places, elephants, horse riders and a depiction of a flutist.

The Bundelas, who were powerful in Central India, founded the city of Orchha in 1531. Mural paintings were made on the walls of all the palaces within the magnificent Orchha Fort. The Raj Mahal was completely adorned with mural paintings of the 17th century. What remains of these, exhibits a blend of the two most significant styles of painting in India at that time- the Mughal and the Rajput. The expressions are often gentle. Exposure to the Mughal court also led to a sense of courtly sophistication.

There are surviving mural paintings from the 17th century onwards in Rajasthan. They present a varied tapestry, with the constant interaction of the indigenous idiom of mural painting and the influences coming from the imperial Mughal court.



DEITY OF VAJRADHATU MANDALA, Nako Monastery, Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, 11th/12th century AD

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PADMAPANI, Cave 1, Ajanta, Maharashtra, 5th century

The Padmapani, the Bearer of the Lotus, greets us at the entrance to the antechamber of the shrine in Cave 1. He symbolizes the Peace of the Spirit and presents a deep and inward look, which is the hallmark of the great paintings of Ajanta.

With the development of Vajrayana Buddhism, the Padmapani is transformed into Avalokitesvara, who becomes the most revered deity of the trans-Himalayas, in later centuries.

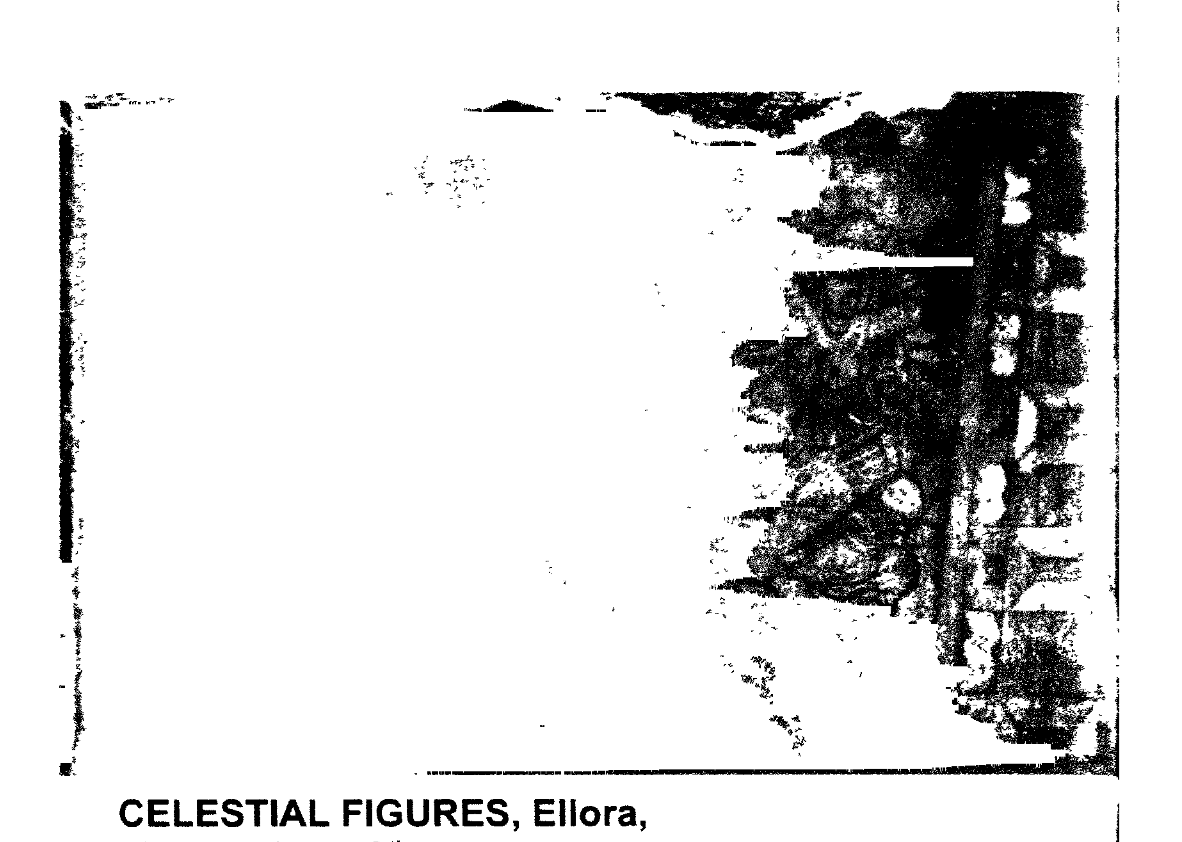
The finest wall paintings of Rajasthan are found in the *Bhojanshala* of the Amer Palace near Jaipur. These are exquisite drawings of the 17th century, on Vaishnava themes. In depicting these divine images, the artist appears to transcend himself.

These drawings are made in panels upon the wall and are small in scale for murals. However, the sensitivity and honest depiction of the painter creates an intimacy between the viewer and the painting.

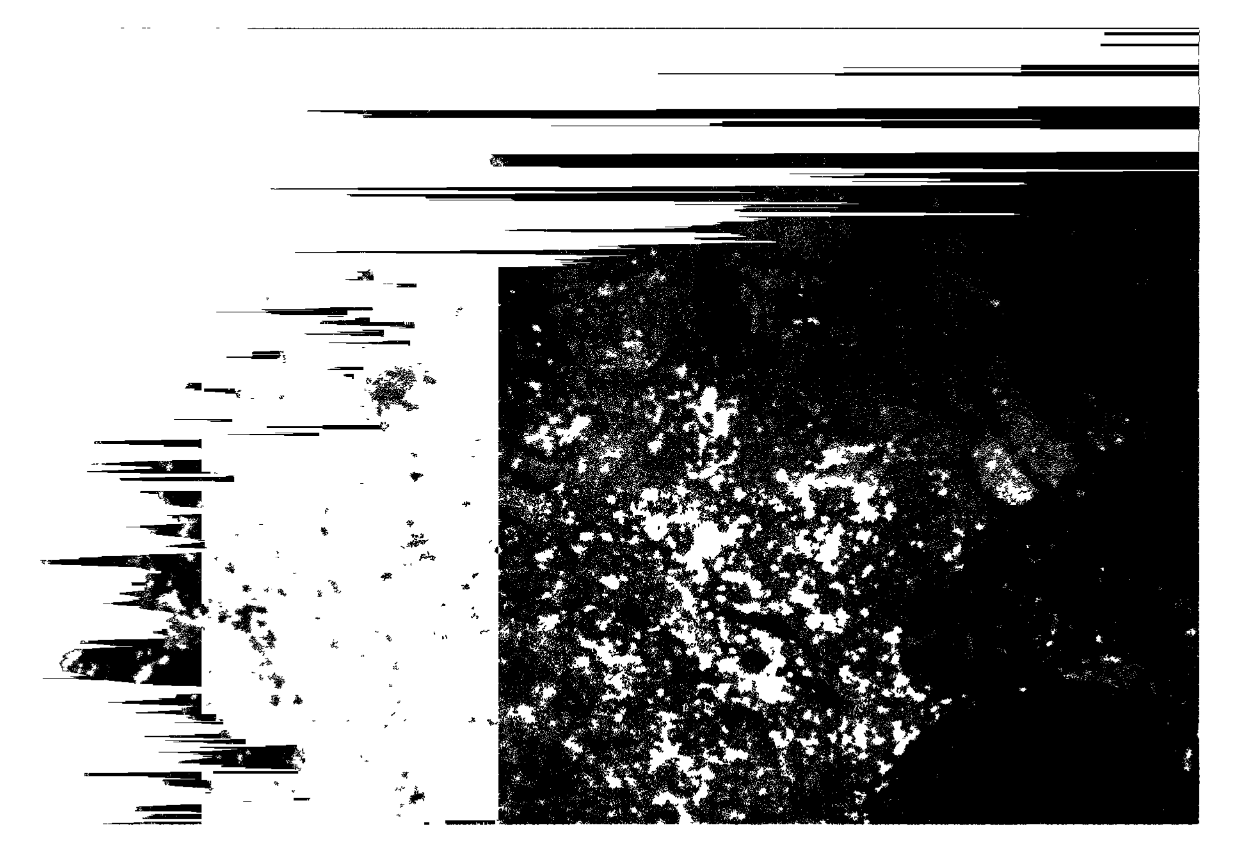
Rajasthan was on the major trade routes of days gone by. The area of Shekhawati has a concentration of 19th and



T SHIVA, Kailasanatha Temple, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, 7th century
The glorious paintings of the Kailasanatha Temple present the beginning of regal grandeur in Indian paintings.



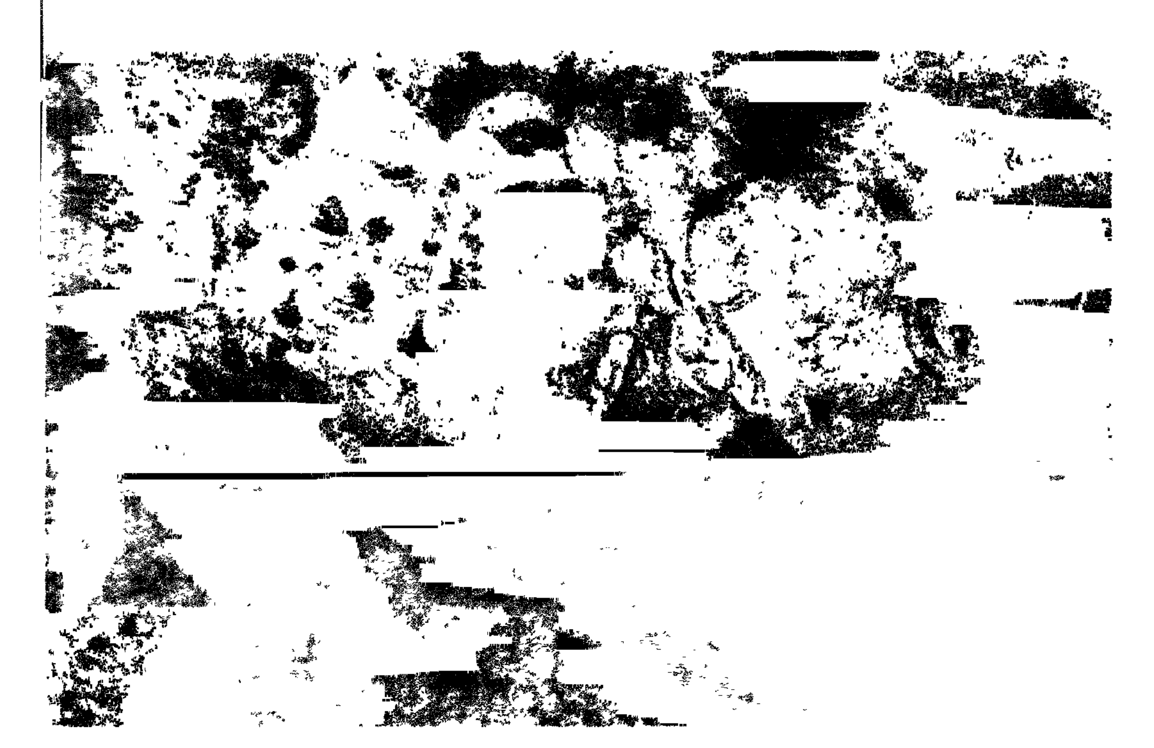
CELESTIAL FIGURES, Ellora, Maharashtra, 9th century
These beautiful paintings surviving in the Jain caves of Ellora depict the continuation of the classic tradition of Indian painting, coming from Ajanta. Here we also see the beginnings of features such as greater stylisation, which develops into the norms of medieval painting.



WORSHIPPER GATHERING LOTUSES, Sittannavasal, Tamil Nadu, 9th century
The figure is made with a lilting grace, like the stalks of the lotuses he gathers. The flowers are painted with a great sense of tenderness and beauty and are as large as the humans and animals in the painting.

LADY, Badami, Karnataka, 6th century

These are the oldest surviving Hindu paintings and they reflect the compassionate feelings and deep, inward look, which is seen in their contemporaneous Buddhist art.





FLUTIST, Fatehpur Sikri, 16th century

Though Mughal miniatures are extremely well known and celebrated, the fact that murals were also commissioned by the Mughal emperors is known by very few. This painting is in the interior of Mariam's Palace and depicts a western lady playing the flute.

WORSHIPPER, Pitalkhora, Maharashtra, 5th century

The exquisite expressions of the surviving paintings at Pitalkhora, reflect the gentleness and fine expression of the paintings of Ajanta. The many Buddhist caves of Western India would once have all been covered with mural paintings. Very little survives today of these paintings.





VAJRAPANI, Cave 1, Ajanta, Maharashtra, 5th century

On the other side of the entrance to the antechamber of the shrine in Cave 1, is painted the Vajrapani, the Bearer of the Thunderbolt. He symbolizes the Majesty of the Spirit. This is another great Bodhisattva who continues to be worshipped all over the trans-Himalayas, till today.

20th century *havelis* which are profusely painted. The paintings here reflect the opulence of the flourishing trading community of the Marwaris.

The cultural impact of the sudden exposure to European influences is reflected in the varied and indiscriminate depiction of a wide array of subjects. These range from the eternal religious themes to the new inventions which the traders would have seen in their visits to the major port cities.

The verdant Pahari hills saw the finest continuation of the tradition of murals in India. The 18th and 19th century paintings on the walls of the Rang Mahal in Chamba are among the best surviving examples of Pahari murals.

The themes are mostly religious and the styles are closely related to those of the miniature paintings of the region. We see fine expressions, the refinement of Pahari miniatures and an exuberant and joyous sense of life.

Orissa, in the eastern plains of India, is a land of the rich continuation of ancient culture. The 18th century paintings on the walls of the Viranchinarayan Temple at Buguda are some of the finest surviving murals of that period in India.

These are rare instances of the continuation of the ancient Indian mural tradition. These are not like miniatures made upon the walls. The themes are from the *Ramayana*. The sense of humanity and humility in these paintings reminds us of the finest of ancient Indian paintings.

The murals of Punjab perhaps represent the last phase of wall paintings in India. We see here shades of realism from the tradition of Mughal miniatures and yet faces that are distinctly of the Punjab. The themes and the manner are deeply rooted in the local culture. There is a quiet sense of dignity which emerges in the best of these paintings.

Mural paintings are found hidden away in temples in the midst of busy market places in Amritsar, in temples in villages such as Kishankot and in the Qila Mubarak and Qila Androon in the Patiala fort.



DANCING GIRL, Brhadisvara Temple, Tamil Nadu, early 11th century

These paintings are in the dark inner ambulatory corridor of the Brhadisvara Temple and have been seen by very few. However, they are among the most important paintings in the history of Indian art and display the highest qualities of excellence.

In ancient times, the philosophical ideas of Hinduism and Buddhism spread from India to practically every corner of Asia. As art was an integral part of life and religion, the concepts of Indian art spread far and wide, alongwith the philosophy.

In 1930, Laurence Binyon, Director of the British Museum, wrote, "Whoever studies the art of China and Japan, at whatever point he begins, starts on a long road which will lead him ultimately to Ajanta." Scholars in all the Asian countries trace the roots of their classic paintings to the murals of India.

The paintings of the 5th century of Sigiriya and of the 12th century of Polonnaruva in Sri Lanka; mural paintings of the 12th-13th century *pagodas* of Bagan in Myanmar and the classic paintings of the Horyuji temple in Japan closely reflect the traditions of Indian paintings.

The art of Asia has been informed by a deep vision of the eternal harmony of the world. It is this vision of life which shaped the grace and the forms of the paintings of Ajanta. The art travelled with its philosophy of compassion all across Asia to create a vision that shaped the culture of a whole continent.

***Benoy K Behl** is an art-historian, filmmaker and photographer. He is the author of* The Ajanta Caves *and is known worldwide for his pioneering photography of mural paintings. He has produced 26 films for Doordarshan on* The Paintings of India, *covering the tradition of Indian painting from prehistoric times till the present.*

On the 3rd of November this year, Mr. Behl is delivering an illustrated talk on The Murals of India *at the Nehru Centre of the Indian High Commission, London.*

Past, Present and Future

SHERGIL AND BEYOND

Suneet Gupta



Nearly seventy years after it was painted in Amritsar in early 1935, Amrita Shergil's "Group of Three Girls" became the inspiration of an exhibition of fifty women artists sponsored by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations.

On the face of it, the painting is almost lack-luster. The three girls are extremely plain looking. Their bodies are full but covered with undulating drapes. They could be any girls almost anywhere. In fact, they could be a cluster of votive deities or a knot of mountains. What holds the eye is the flow of line and warmth of colour. It is perhaps the least contrived of the artiste's works.

Yet, almost from the first time it was exhibited it attracted critical attention. It was exhibited for the first time with works of the Ukil brothers at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai in an exhibition that opened on November 20, 1936. [illegible]

This exhibition was followed by another in Hyderabad that was a glittering affair. The exhibition was opened by the prince Berar and was visited by the poet Sarojini Naidu and her two daughters who the artist found congenial company. But it also brought her face to face with Salar Jung- III, the most powerful of the Bilgrami clan of Saiyads, a major patron of art, who was the artist's work and felt he had "No use for these Cubist pictures"!

String by this, the artist retorted that she was surprised how anyone with taste could buy Leighton's, Bougerance and Watts as Salar Jung had done, when he could just as easily have bought Cezannes, Van Goghs and Gauguins. Worse, she found his collection to be little more than "millions of rupees worth of junk". But to be fair, she admitted it had good Mughal and Rajasthani miniatures. Obviously neither the patron nor the artiste was amused by the encounter. But the critics regaled her show as "ample proof of her genius."

The final proof of the work's excellence, if any was needed, came with the Bombay Arts Society awarding Amrita a gold medal for it at its forty sixth annual exhibition of art in 1937. Characteristically the artist opined that she had got the award because her friend, Karl Khandalwala was in the judging committee! Such things do not happen by accident. It is interesting that she had written an article on "Modern Indian Art" that appeared in the *Khalsa Review* around the same time as she painted the picture.

In this, she stated: "A picture must be a painting, which means that a picture of a chair or a pair of boots must be aesthetically satisfying and interesting as the portrait of a remarkably handsome man or charming woman."





The year 1935 was a period when it was becoming increasingly clear that India would become independent. The calls to 'Quit India' were becoming increasingly strident and it is interesting that the year the 'Group of Three Girls' was awarded the gold medal by the Bombay Arts Society, the congress was elected to power in a number of provinces of British India. The Empire was on the way out.

This was of significance to an artiste like Amrita, who had in 1934 written to her parents that "Modern art has led me to the comprehension and apprehension of Indian painting and sculpture......had we not come away to Europe, I should perhaps never have realized that a fresco from Ajanta or a small piece of sculpture in the Musée Guimet is worth more than the whole renaissance."

In fact, it was precisely this perception of the fusion of modern art forms with those of pre-colonial art of the colonized people that made her spew venom on the colonial art of Raja Ravi

Indeed, her painting of the 'Group of Three Girls' is just that. The three 'Plain Janes' could be any girls. In fact, her treatment of them is so austere and paradigmatic that they are no different from Cezanne's mountain studies. The warm colours, sweeping drapes and solid bodies of the figures have the strength and resilience of a mountain range.

They are cast in the mould of mother-goddesses to be. And yet, like the prehistoric images of mother-goddesses, it is their shape that matters, not their individual features. That is why time has not stated this painting.

It seems as fresh today as when it was painted. This is largely because the artist has stripped it of individual references. This was a conscious act, for she writes in her 'Khalsa Review' article, "Painting is the primary factor and the subject only the secondary factor in a picture". But the subject and the time it was painted in, imperceptibly centres into the ambience of a work of art.





Varma, which blended a slavish lifting of styles and motifs from the imperial art of the colonizers with blind revivalism of the imagined past of the colonized. She stated unequivocally. "Art cannot imitate the forms of the past to be the present....it must draw its inspiration from the present to create the forms of the future."

From this perspective, it is evident that a blend of the warm colours of Bashohli miniatures that admired so much with the somber look of the girls of Amritsar, where the Jallianwala Bagh massacre had taken place in 1919, followed up by innumerable atrocities committed by the British Army against those who protested, could be seen to be the basis of the austerity of this picture. In fact, the colours of this picture remind us of those of Abhinendranath Tagore's 'Mother India' of 1907. So, whether it was intended or not by the artiste, her image of the three girls of Amritsar ends up becoming the mothers of India-to-be. It's a much more realistic image than any self-conscious symbolic image could be. That is why, being both modern and austere in the tradition of our national movements, this image continues to inspire artists even today.



Judging from the number of works in this exhibition that virtually reproduce the image or deviate from it only marginally, the 'group of three girls' has obviously overpowered a number of our very good women artists with awe. But there are some like the works of Gogi Saroj Pal and Nimisha Sharma that stand out for their painterly qualities. It is interesting that both choose to highlight even a more austere image, with Gogi putting a white clad figure in the forefront and Nimisha giving her image a somber black mood. Both remind us that a facile relief that no

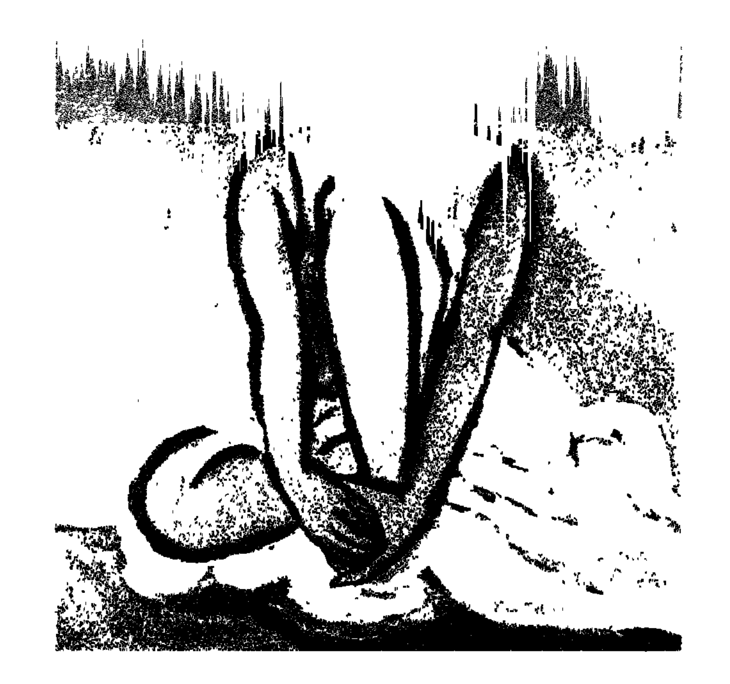


more was to be done after we gained independence in 1947 and became a republic in 1950 no longer holds good. And the austerity and spirit of sacrifice that characterized the national movement was needed to carry the process of liberation forwarded in Indian society itself. Fighting internal struggles among one's own people not only requires a different set of rules but also is much more nuanced.

As a result, one notices the changes that have taken place in society since. Arpana Caur in her 'Third Sister' highlights the spirit of 'dog eat dog' (most unnatural for animals but perfectly natural for those who swear by the economics of Adam Smith) in a world of celebrities and the marginalized Durga Kainthola again brings these two worlds into sharp contrast by introducing an image of the artist with those of the three girls, highlighting the distance between the world of glamour and of drudgery. Kakoli Sen identifies the artiste completely with her work and addresses the question of a woman growing up in a traditional society at any level of satisfaction.

It is interesting, however that the majority of the works limit themselves to the self-expression of women in a much more bold and transparent world, as Radhika Shrinagesh

does in her assemblage, with its overt sexuality. Shrinagesh, who has assembled the exhibition, has brought out the question of the liberated sexual expression of women to the fore that Amrita kept separate in two compartments: the first being her lifestyle and the second her artistic expression.



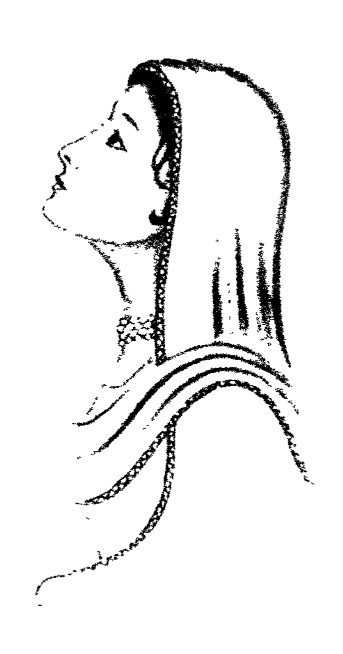




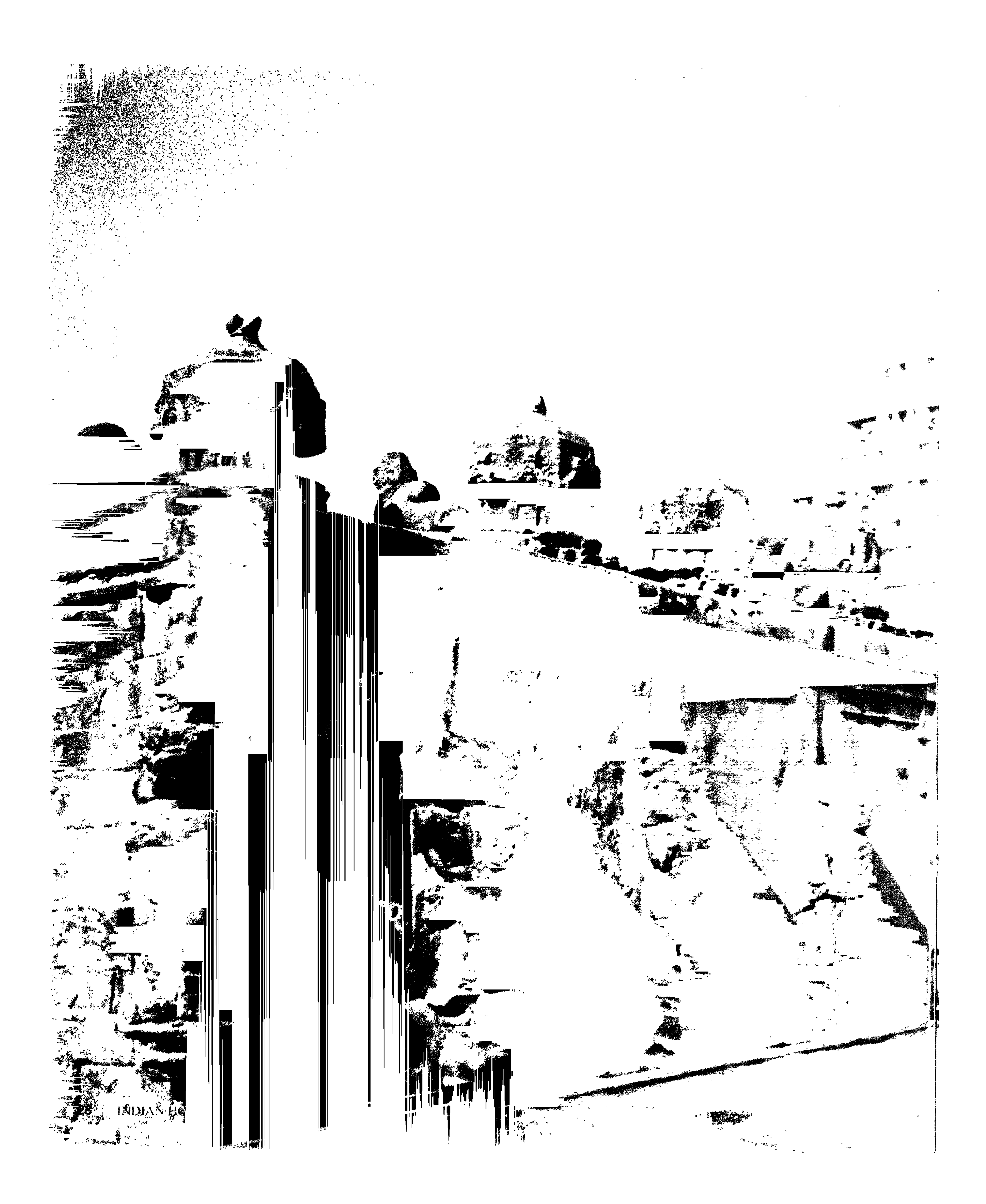


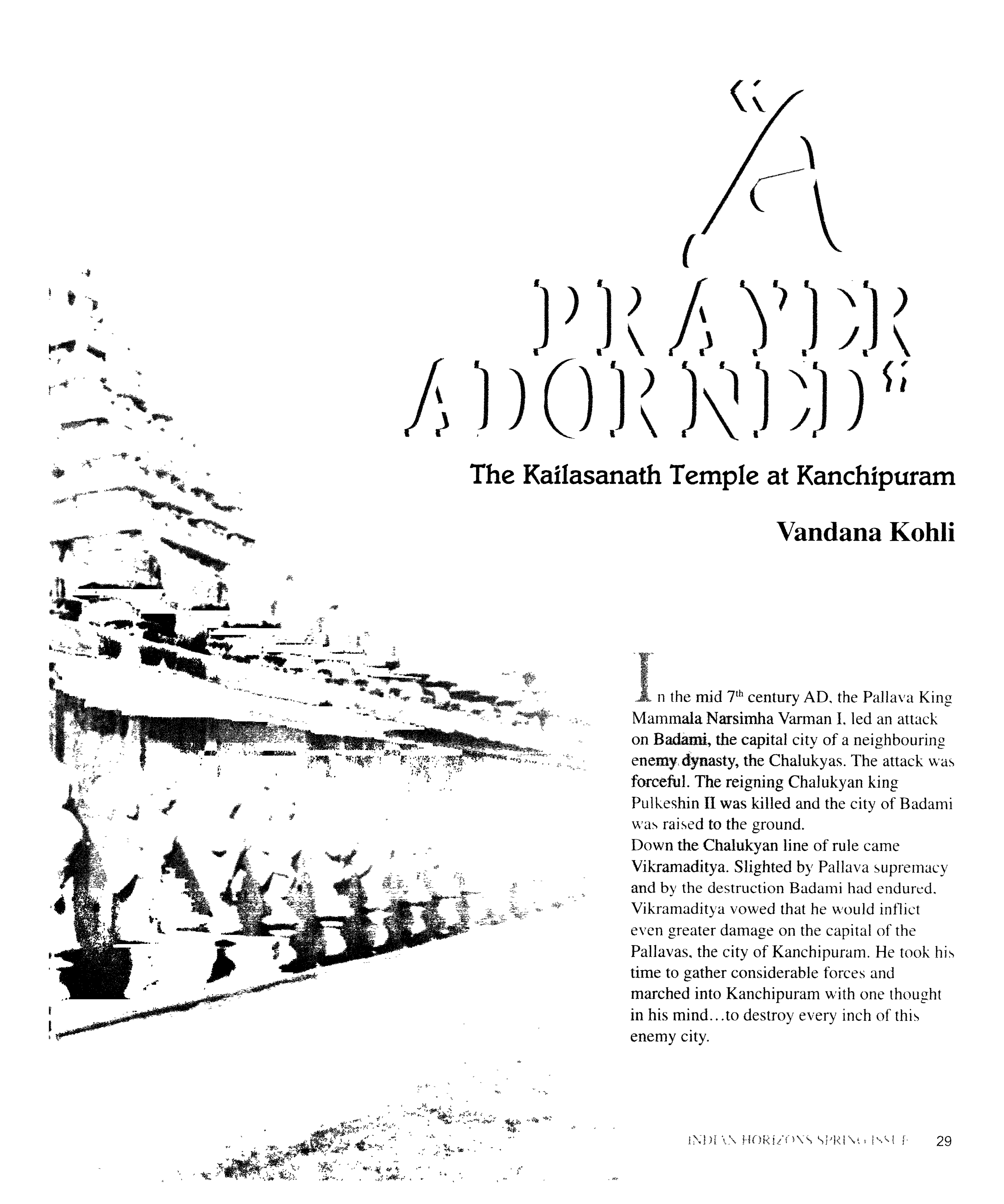
Obviously the two compartments were not water-tight, but where Amrita's art of the mid thirties was austere and political, concerned with an India that was liberating itself in which all other sorts of liberation were subsumed, things are different today. The achievement of political liberation has brought the question of sectional and personal liberation forward.
It is harmonized in Anu Naik's painting of three rural drudges. And the question of women's liberation as part and parcel of the liberation of the rural workers comes to the forefront.

Elsewhere, as in Pooja Broota Iranna's cloistered version of the 'Group of Three Girls' the element of protection as a form of oppression, as in the case of 'honour killings' is addressed with a certain subtlety.
But in essence, the reflection of changing times permeates the exhibition. We no longer have the grandiose vision of the national movement or the avant-garde expression of the modernists in art. Post-modernist interventions preferring innovation to creative originality have crept in, while the urge to storm citadels seems to have become an urge to transform them by decorating them. We are again in a watershed. Perhaps in the next five years or so, some of



these young artists (in their post-modernist cocoons) will break out of them and give us a butterfly like Amrita again. And, as history never repeats itself, we hope for a brighter one: and who will not be a short-lived as Amrita was. ■





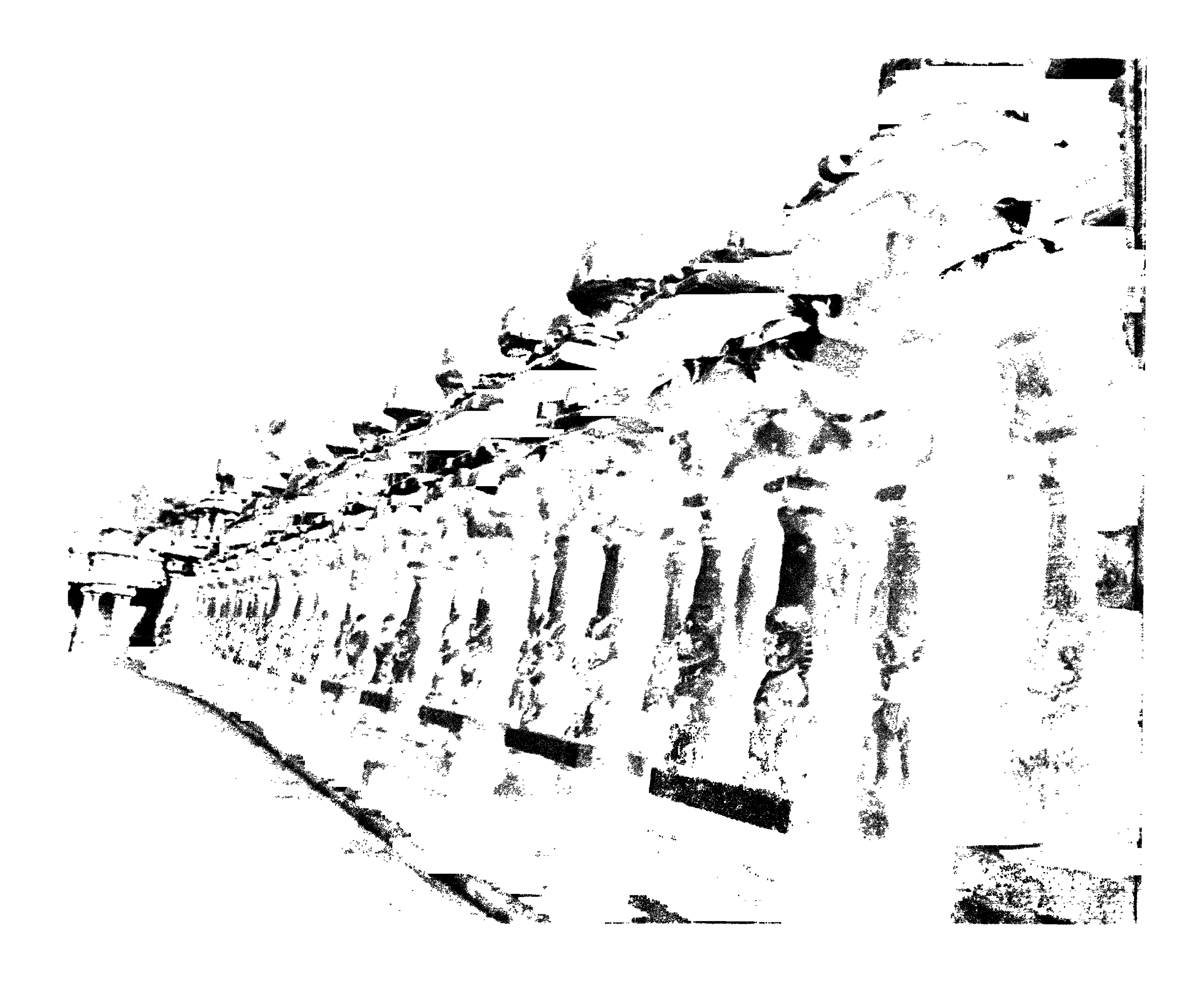
"A PRAYER ADORNED"

The Kailasanath Temple at Kanchipuram

Vandana Kohli

In the mid 7th century AD, the Pallava King Mammala Narsimha Varman I, led an attack on Badami, the capital city of a neighbouring enemy dynasty, the Chalukyas. The attack was forceful. The reigning Chalukyan king Pulkeshin II was killed and the city of Badami was raised to the ground.

Down the Chalukyan line of rule came Vikramaditya. Slighted by Pallava supremacy and by the destruction Badami had endured, Vikramaditya vowed that he would inflict even greater damage on the capital of the Pallavas, the city of Kanchipuram. He took his time to gather considerable forces and marched into Kanchipuram with one thought in his mind...to destroy every inch of this enemy city.



Legend has it that among the first sites he came upon was the temple of Kailasanath. Struck and stirred deeply by what he saw, Vikramaditya's resolve melted. Never had he seen such enlivening visual depiction of the gods and their stories; such flow and feel carved in stone; such fervent human effort in pursuit of beauty. So he summoned his commanders, and much to their wonder, instructed them anew ..."Draw the enemy army into battle and defeat them, but let not an inch of this city be destroyed", he said.

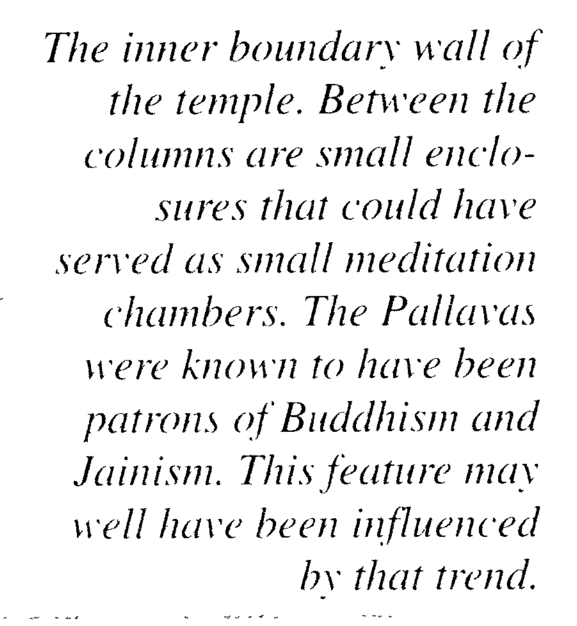
Among the entourage of the king were his court architect and scribe, Anivarata Acharya, as well as his chief queen Lokamahadevi. She directed the architect to note the finer points of detail and design of the temple. When the Chalukyas did return back to their territory, the Queen built a similar temple on home ground, at Pattadakal, near Badami in Karnataka.

The chain of inspiration doesn't quite end here. The Chalukyas were succeeded by the Rashtrakutas, who, taking off from the form of the temple at Pattadakal, built new ones at Ellora!

The Kailasanath Temple is the oldest temple in Kanchipuram, an ancient town in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, India. Built around 700 AD, this temple is among the

finest examples of Pallava art. Though not as large as most temples of the south can be, Kailasanath is simply beautiful: every part of it sculpted and orderly, every wall adorned with mythical stories from the *Puranas*. Though similar strains are found in other temples, the visual representations of the ones here are well reckoned as unmatched. Among innumerable temples in India, perhaps no other edifice has been so elaborately filled with all 64 aspects of Lord Shiva as this one is. It offers the earliest reference to the *Shaivya Siddhanta* (an ancient and significant text that explains the working of the inner and external forces that bind one to *Maya*, the cosmic web). Kailasanath also holds the earliest paintings found in south India (700 AD). Built by Rajasimha Narasimha Varman II, Kailasanath is one example of a temple surviving in its original form, untouched by subsequent rulers.





The inner boundary wall of the temple. Between the columns are small enclosures that could have served as small meditation chambers. The Pallavas were known to have been patrons of Buddhism and Jainism. This feature may well have been influenced by that trend.

Among many of its unique features, Kailasanath houses a Shiva *Linga* that is distinct. This phallic representation of the God in stone isn't smoothly cylindrical as almost all *lingas* usually are. Instead, it is sixteen-sided. The number



is significant. Traditionally, a whole has always been divided into sixteen parts; the Indian rupee till after independence was divided into sixteen *annas*; a child was not considered an adult until he reached the age of sixteen; sixteen purification rites or *Samskaras* are performed from the stage of conception of a child till his marriage vows; any *puja* or prayer ritual of a deity requires sixteen components from flowers to food offerings; the list is quite exhaustive.
And why sixteen?

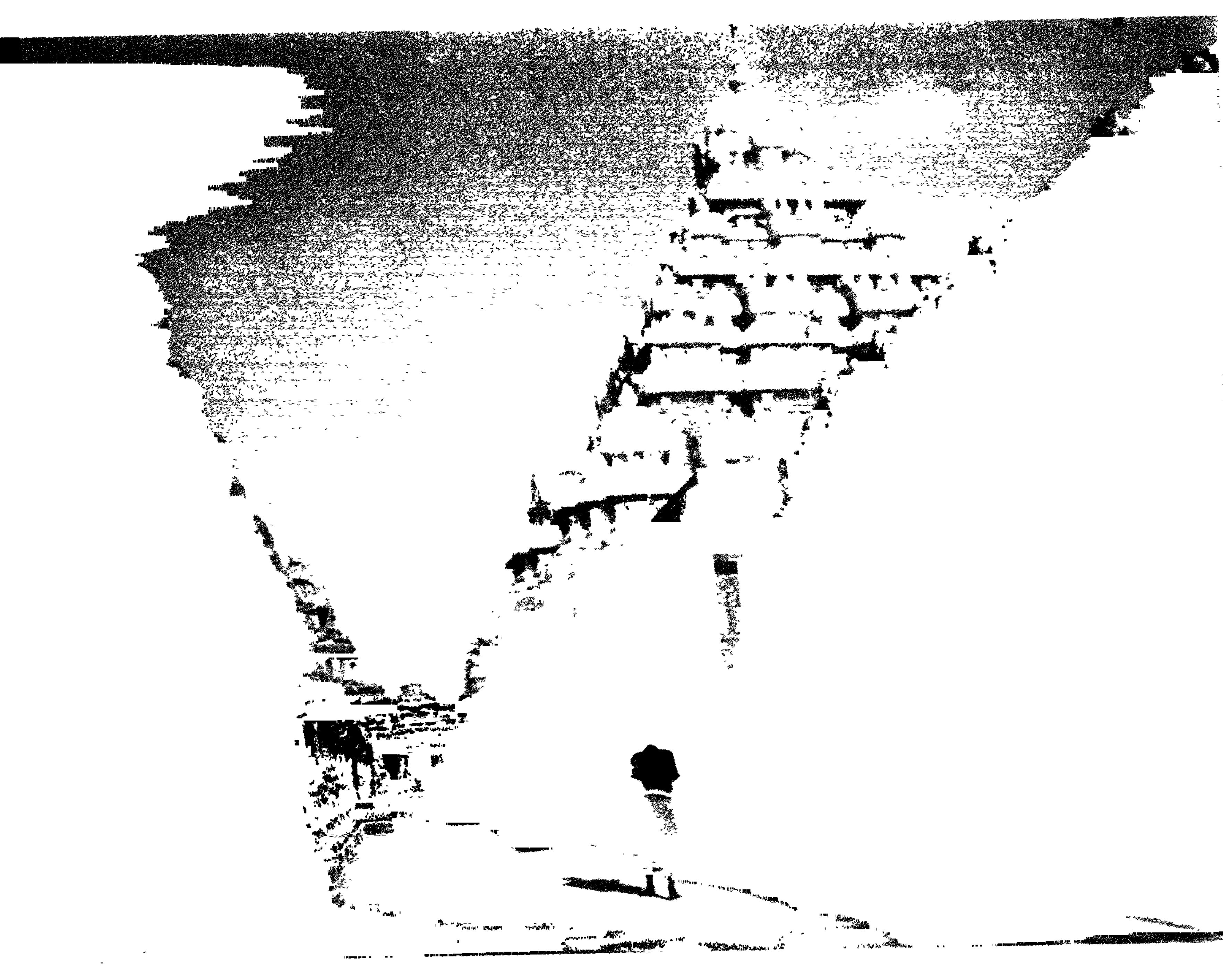
The number comes from an ancient concept known as *Shodas-Kala-Purush*, which reads, literally translated, as a man with sixteen qualities or attributes. He acquires these qualities when he overcomes, one by one, sixteen elements that create the illusion of 'otherness', and hence bind him to the realm of bi-polarity, to the power of opposites; to pleasure and pain. So one of these sixteen elements, for instance, is *Naamam* or name/identity, and *Rupam* or form. These make him believe he is different from another whose name and form are different from his. *Shodas-Kala-Purush* is therefore that man, who, through his power of discretion, in time, is able to see the unity underlying all these elements. This takes him to a plane above differentiation, one which cuts across the bipolarity that he would otherwise find himself caught within. It takes him towards enlightenment, where there is no illusion of differentiation, no longer a pull in opposite directions, just a centered experience of oneness.

And so, when a soul does know enlightenment, the place he lives in apparently holds within it the power to bestow strength, and to aid the meditation of those who come within its vicinity. Even when he is no longer around in his physical form, these precincts exude an energy that can only quicken another's evolution. In

Detail of the inner boundary wall's column design. The symbol of the Lion has been extensively used throughout the temple, both inside as well as on its exterior façade



These small shrines on either side of the entrance of the temple are believed to have been built by the Queens of Narsimha-varman (II) and his son Mahendra-Varman (II). Each houses a Shiva linga where, along with the principle Linga inside, prayers are offered on the night of Shivaratri, an annual festival honouring the God.



A view of the temple's main spire within its inner boundary

fact, often, the bodies of such accomplished, enlightened souls or *Siddha Purush* are not cremated. The *Shankaracharyas* of Kanchipuram follow such a tradition. They are buried instead, for it is believed that even after they leave their bodies, the physical sheath still holds one-sixteenth of the power of enlightenment, enough to bless all who come within its field.

So does this stand for the power of stone, empowered by the reverence of those who worship it. It is the depth and purity of their prayer that perhaps the deity in stone merely reflects. And so it grants them what they seek, for it is but a mirror.

And yet, perhaps no form of matter, stone or water, can be the supreme seat of veneration, as this legend that surrounds the Kailasanath Temple expounds:

As the structure of the temple neared completion, the king consulted the court priests and the court astrologer for an auspicious day and time for the ceremonial consecration or *Kumbha-abhishekham* of the temple deity to be performed. A date was fixed. Yet, the night before the *Kumbha-abhishekham*, the king had a dream. He saw himself standing just outside the temple precincts. Before him stood an ascetic, whose body shone with a blinding radiance, his long, dark matted hair dancing wildly in the wind. With a laugh that thundered through heaven and earth, the ascetic turned to his right and walked on towards what seemed like the echo of a thousand temple bells, ringing with unmatched fervour, in the distance. Despite this burning desire to follow, the king found, to his wonder and dismay, that he couldn't move an inch. And as he watched, helplessly, this radiant being walk away, the wind seemed to whisper to him a name again and again..."Poosalar...Poosalar...Poosalar"...

The King woke up in a sweat. Never had he known such a powerfully vivid dream before, such concentrated consciousness. He could still feel his body unwieldy, the numbness of stone in it.

At the crack of dawn, he summoned those among his closest aides who could help interpret this unusual dream for

him. Soon, they did. The ascetic, they felt, was none other than Shiva Himself. The fact that He had walked away from the king and the temple meant that the time had yet not arrived to sanctify the temple precinct. The Lord, evidently, would not yet grace the structure.

Convinced that this was a sign, the king called off the *Kumbha-abhishekham* for a later date.

Yet through the day, the king and his coterie wondered what had been wrong with the date set? Every calendar had anointed it a propitious day. What then was the cause for the signaled delay?

The answer, felt the king, lay in the sounds he had heard – the echo of temple bells and in the name "Poosalar."

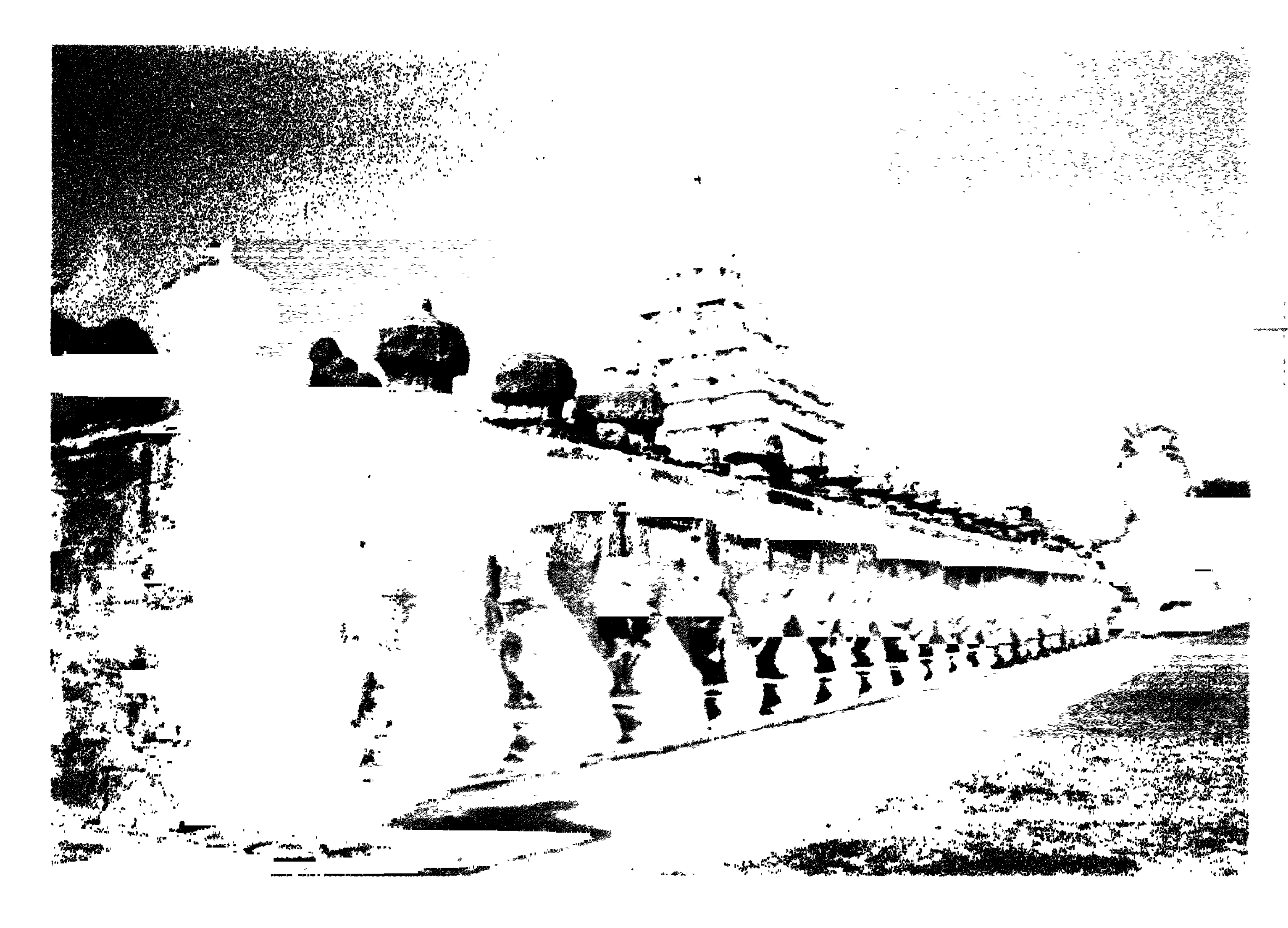
Acting on instinct, he ordered his informers to find out if anywhere, within the empire, had another temple been built and subsequently been consecrated on the date that he had originally set for Kailasanath. He instructed them also to look for a devotee of Shiva, any man named Poosalar.

The search seemed futile, almost. No other temple for Shiva had been built recently, and surely no one had set the same date for the *abhishekham* to coincide with the royal event. Yet, in a small peripheral town called Tiruninravoor, they heard there lived an ardent devotee of Shiva, a brahmin named Poosalar.

The king lost little time. Soon, incognito and with a minimal entourage, he found himself outside the brahmin's door in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of the town. An elderly man with tranquil eyes answered the door. It was Poosalar himself. The king looked at him, perplexed. Here was an elderly brahmin, evidently without a shred to his name and who displayed no outward signs of ardent devotion: neither the confidence of inner affluence, nor the power of concentration of the learned. Could this, then, the king wondered, be the greater devotee of the Lord, the reason for Him not gracing Kailasanath, the most splendid temple ever built? Seeking an explanation, and led on by the gentle and calm demeanour of the Brahmin, the king, once seated, narrated to him his dream.

Adorning the wall of the sanctum, this relief is one of the 64 visual representations of Shiva's forms. Here Shiva as the central figure is seen handing the Shaivya Siddhanta to Nandikeshwar.





It was perhaps a personal insignia of the patron King, whose very name Narsimha-varman stands for 'the hero with the might of a lion".

Poosalar sat silently through, listening to every word, not interrupting once. He remained silent for what seemed like a long while to the curious, impatient and regal stance of the king. Finally, the elder spoke. "For as long as I can remember", he said, "I have wished to build a temple for Shiva. But despite my most sincere efforts, I couldn't seem to gather the means to do so. Yet, for many, many moons, I have laid, brick by brick, the foundations of such a temple in the shrine of my heart. I have imagined, in my mind's eye, the execution of every plinth and column, the formation of every chamber, and carving of every inch telling the story of His essence and power. I chose, with attention to the minutest detail, what I felt was the finest of all that was needed".

He paused here to look earnestly at his guest. "Forgive me," he continued, "but the date I set to invite the Lord to imbue his presence into this structure within my heart was, unbeknownst to me, the day you chose for your *Kumbha-abhishekham*. I spent the night before preparing for it, arranging for all I needed, gathering in my mind and heart the purest of every offering, the finest silk, the most fragrant flowers. I prepared food for it, the richest this realm can offer. And as the sun spread the first ray of its saffron splendour, with my mind and consciousness centered, I performed the *abhishekham* in my heart." And his eyes lit up as he asked the king, "Has the Lord arrived then?"

For moments that followed, the King was speechless. He had prided himself for building what he knew was the greatest temple ever, unparalleled in its beauty and opulence. He had considered his vigour of effort unmatched, his dedication unrivalled. And here, before him was this old, unassuming man, weaker than him in every external way, who had adorned, within his heart, a prayer, making it undoubtedly the seat of the greatest veneration the king would ever know.

He folded his hands and bowed his head in obeisance to the Brahmin, and said with humility, "Yes, o devoted one, the Lord has indeed arrived."

(The author would like to acknowledge inputs from Dr. S Nagaswamy, Prof. Narainji Jha, Prof. Pothy and Mukund Krishnan)

Sufi Inspiration in Art

Geeta Vadhera

Sitting with white papers in front, next to me, an inviting blank canvas by my side is,in itself, such a complete moment. It announces the readiness- the about to be – the completeness of non existing existence. The beginning of a painting, poetry, song, weave is like the appearance of the first leaf. One-ness with your outer and inner world calls you, invites you to project.

Sufiana Kalaam - The words of the Sufi sages - simple words- for everyone to understand. There isn't any pretension here - these words come direct from one heart and invite you to take a leap from the circumference to your very center - your core being. The circumference (the capacity) and the center is the essential start point between the outer and inner world, between mind and no mind, between matter and consciousness. This bridge between the two is the basic value system that emerges from within. The self could be enclosed, encapsulated, till we experience, explore or come out, giving life to life - getting close to the basic *satya* (truth) of consciousness - and then it takes off from there, it happens'-it's the Joy of Baba Bulleh Shah, the profoundness of Hillaj Mansoor- the simplicity of Baba Farid. Not living like walking graves but most meaningfully, existing is to be next to life. The whole joy is to identify — and experience the transparency within.

Concentration illuminates illusions and the true nature of reality emerges which is the ultimate experience of profoundness. Their poetry,the Sufiana Kalaam, be it in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Sindhi or Sariki has layers and layers of the peeling off process of the very self *(Jo kuj andar tainda sab taa de)* — empty out yourself as much as you can. This understanding could be easy to a child and difficult to a sage..

There is no temple other than existence itself first. Whole is what is holy, and this whole journey is like back home. From the point, to the point. It is sublime- It is not a journey from here to there but on the contrary, it is from there to here. We are invited to go from "Then" to "Now" - where there is a meeting of moment to the soul. Beyond the physical surface or the objective information, lies the Real, the transformation which clearly defines

that the knower is bigger than the knowledge. Knowledge is the first contact. It can explain and analyze Christianity, Hinduism , Buddhism. But it cannot produce a Buddha or a Jesus. Wisdom is not knowledge but it is the insight, the clarity, the basic value system which brings profoundness.

To know is to know all. To Know is to Be, because then the knower and the known are no longer separate. The knower is the known, the seer is the seen, the observer is the observed.

The Arabic word *Nafs* means total freed self, the Sufi self. It also means a pure basic breath, which is such a basic truth. Beyond physical reality and physical time and space there is this all-encompassing self or the greater self, which is inseparable from cognition. I seemed to stand outside of my limited self. Moving backwards, forwards and experiencing entirety within.

The innocence and purity is the only condition of the unconditioned state, which is Sufi. Interestingly, it reminds me of the little shepherd-boy story - who used to take his sheep everyday to the hilltop and whilst the sheep would graze, he would have a loud, hearty chat with his god.

"God, you must be so alone, like me - no one caring for you. I'm sure you're unattended and no one has given you a bath - there will be so many tangles in your hair by now. Please call me I will do all that cleaning and then we can speak our heart out to each other", and so on. The day would set and the shepherd boy would return to his little hut- contented sheep would go to sleep.

Until one day, a *pandit* met this boy. Using his *panditya* (wisdom), he told the shepherd boy, "You know nothing, O Fool. This is not the way to reach God, silly. He'd never listen to your prayers like this. Pay me my fee and I will teach you the actual prayer."

The boy worked hard to satisfy him for it was so important for him to learn the *pandit's* way. Days passed by and after some time the *pandit* died. Confronting God, he shouted " Why hell for me and not heaven? I did so much good in my lifetime?" God smiled meaningfully and said, "You committed the biggest sin by killing the innocence of a heart. We were so close to each other and you taught him to be boxed – you took away his transparency – What to talk of teaching – you deprived him of his own individuality."

The purity is what Sufi is. So, to talk about Sufi inspiration, the Sufi state is the all important start point to be understood. The word Sufi comes from the word *Saf* - which in Persian means pure. Sufis are called so for their transparency of vision. It is said that the one who dies for love dies a Sufi. And Sufi never die. Its important somewhere to talk about the uncovering - going deeper - discovering the very soul of the thought, which is so undisturbed, joyous, giving free experience of being with the essential. Immanuel Kant puts it like this, "In this state of clarity, the content disappears and the form emerges. Expression sprouts, the transparency links the soul within, and art emerges." The basic commonality,or shall I say, the meditative sublime oneness between Art and Sufi expression is really so profoundly close to each other that it is difficult to say which appears first. The thought process of the *Sufiana Kalaam* is basically a leap from the circumference to the center of the human soul. The circumference is the capacity – the outer world. The center is the inner world - the essential, the home, and the source. Now 'between mind and no mind, between matter and consciousness, the real emerges'. *Jo kuj andar tainda, sub taa de* — or, clear all hurdles, constraints and walls inside you.

This verse of the medieval Bulleh Shah marks his progress from being One with the One. Bulleh Shah - the Sufi poet - (1680-1735 AD) was born in a Syed family of Qasur - now in Pakistan. Once, Bulleh Shah bowed before Inaayat Qadri - the market gardener who was transplanting onions (Qadri historically taught Dara Shikoh later and led him to initiate attempts to synchronize Hinduism and Islam). Qadri spoke while working:

Bulleh-ya
Rab da ki paan
Aidron putna tey Oddar laana

(do you seek God: just put your soul from here (below) to there on nigh)

When we talk of Sufis- its important to understand that all of Sufism stems from a said master. The master is at the heart of the Sufi thought process. What the master says (the *Kalaam*) is meaningless without the master. You may have an understanding, you may read the same verse as the master and yet, without the context that the master provides, the words are meaningless. Thus, the book of the Sufis is a book of white pages. Implying that there is nothing which you can learn without the master. Yet, the master cannot teach you more than what you choose to learn. Noted American psychologist Carl Rogers has experimented and come to the conclusion that possibly, nothing can be "taught" by one person to the other. Everything has to be learnt in the presence of a facilitator. Each verse is an interpretation - contextual to the time, space and life of the master. Each attempt to learn is contextual to the individual seeking to learn.

With the master no more with us, the interpretation comes through snatches of insights provided by others. Perhaps they are on the right track. Perhaps the master would have said the same thing. Perhaps not. Thus, the role of the Sufi artist is as much to make an attempt to understand the master's verses and reinterpret them in his or her context and age and present them to an audience. Whether the audience is able to make the same Sufi connection or not is never quite known. Partly, this will depend upon their need to make a connection and to understand. Partly it will depend upon whether the artist was able to make the leap himself or herself. Whether the artist was successful or not in understanding the true meaning - perhaps we never can tell. But this is what the artist in his or her capacity as potential Sufi student has understood. This is what he or she wishes to communicate. This is the inspiration, which the artist wishes to pass on to the world.

Thus eminent Sufi singer Puran Chand Vadali adds to the verse through his own soulful profound expression and resounding voice full of movement. It makes one wonder - what comes first? As an artist working on Sufi art myself people often ask me - do you paint first or these words come first? Well, first is the meeting, which just happens between the thoughts and the expression. Between inhaling and preserving. Before I express, exhale or paint, that spark pushes me. That essence is what is important between the audience and the art. That is the inspiration, which helps me understand myself as much as helps me build the artwork.

And then the role of the audience -Why does one stay longer with one work ? Why is it that one song out of all the others strikes one in an unknowing, wordless way? Perhaps because it relates better to that individual - it is pure meeting that takes place. Rest of it is all content. May that be art, Kalaam poetry creates a movement within, which is a start point of the journey. And some work often leaves one cold.

Today, AR Rahman, the music composer picks up *Tere ishq nachaya karke thaiyya thaiya*. Muzaffar Ali works his timeless journey of calligraphical works of art, Satya Paul in his textile flow of garment designs, talks of *Jado di mai Jogi di hoi* - a garment designer who designs closely to the true essence of the fabric of life.

Begum Abida Praveen, the successor to the legacy of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan -is regarded as one of the greatest singers of Sufi culture. A Sindhi from Larkana, she is a disciple of Ustad Salaamat Ali Khan, and sings Sufi songs in Punjabi, Sindhi, Sariki, and Hindi.

Way back, Shah Abdul Latif, an 18th century poet and composer, blended folk music and classical *ragas* in a style known as *Kaafi*. Begum Abida Praveen primarily sings the *Kaafi* soaked in Sufi poetry as well as the soulful *Kalaam* into *ghazals*. The Sufi *masti* flows through Abida's (invisible) in visible godly voice. Shah Hussain, Bulleh Shah, Baba Farid, Baba Hazrat Sultan Baahu, and Rumi have given the poetry a mystical experience incommunicable fully through words, awaits to be experienced. Often, when I listen to her sing, what she is saying is so meaningless - it is where she is saying it from that suddenly strikes. Perhaps her inspiration lies within her own soul and the verses, but my inspiration lies in her interpretation.

Calligraphy is another area sprouting from total dedication - an outcome of your total freed self. Each letter that holds the breath spells in space the very soul of the word which lies within the character. Calligraphy is so close to a prayer - so personal, full of movement and joy - but it demands a pure state of collected self. In

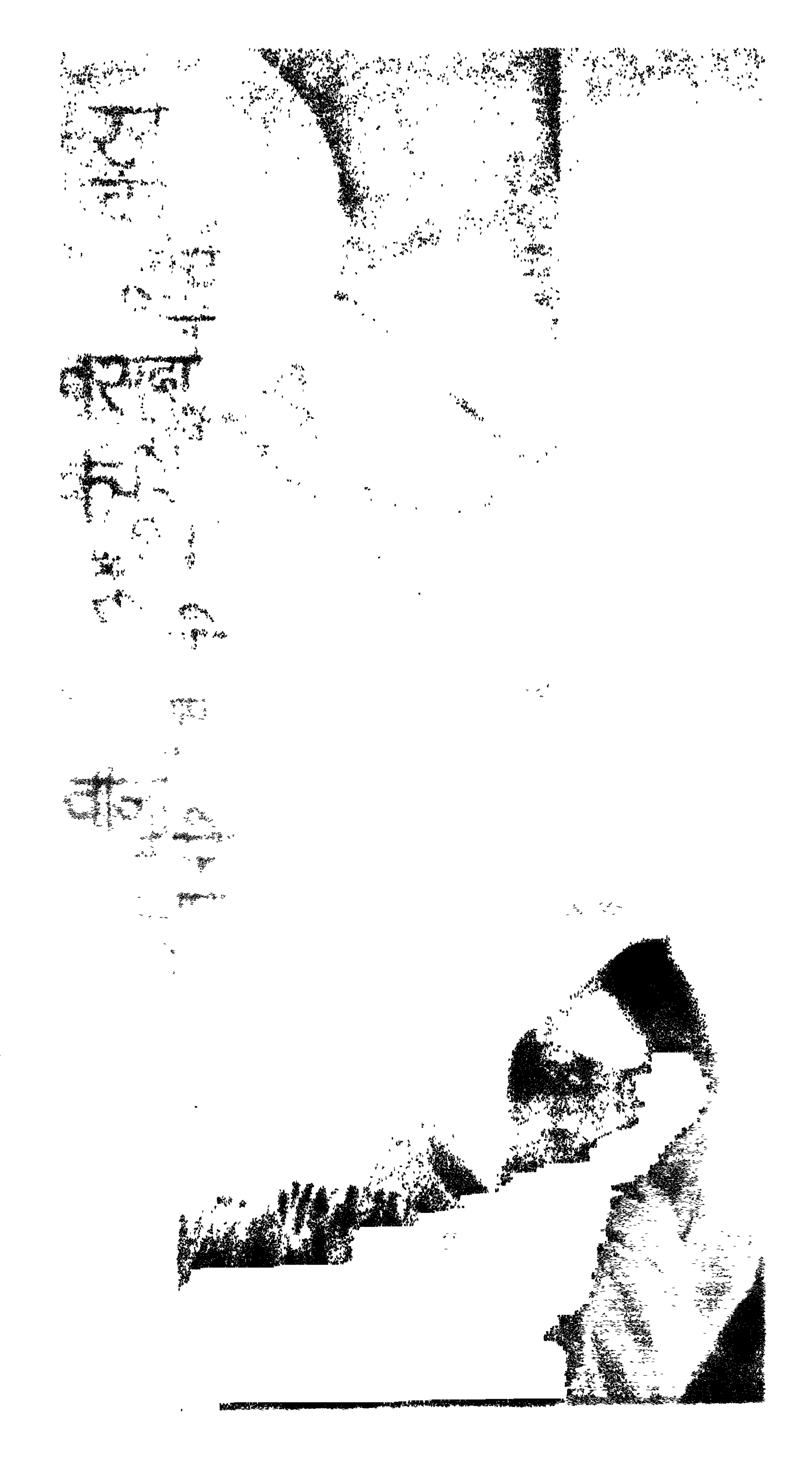
paintings, calligraphy has the capacity to have one to one conversation with the theme.

I have worked extensively in calligraphy. I was the first Indian to work on the inherent poetry within the *Devnagri* script (my works in this context are now placed permanently in the archives in Germany). In a recent series, titled *Jogia Dhoop*- the saffron sunshine - I have picked up some of these pearls of Mohd. Hazrat Mohani, Baba Bulleh Shah, Hazrat Shah Niaz, Hazrat Zaheen Shah Taaji, Baba Farid and Rumi as the inspiring force. For example, some of Baba Bulleh Shah's thoughts have such an intense and immense depth and beauty that it strikes a chord. It emerges from the same base as of a true Zen master or of the singing shepherd of the hills (which I had talked of earlier in the article) who has only innocence to offer in his prayers.

A search for this innocence, this silence is the source of the flowing music in my works- created in multiple tones of lilac, grey or dusky dusty siennas fading in time. Sometimes a spread of movement inspired by the *Raag Vistaar* in Indian music or a small couplet, a *bandish* of a *ghazal* - the flow of tones into space is behind the visual experience of the paintings.

The treatment is delicately graded . The succession of hues, one dissolving into another suggests the *Kalaam* resounding, appearing and fading into space. The potential of the oils and the fluid transparency is a medium handled closely enough to the selected mood of the works. In these paintings, calligraphy is imprinted as a murmur, the sound-resounds. Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), speaking of a spiritual encounter with Rembrandt, says, "It moved me deeply , the flow of colour has dark and dissolve approach which has the effect of antiphony (purely musical term). It evokes the sound within me."

I will attempt to illustrate my point by referring to two of my recent paintings from *Jogia Dhoop-rab* and *jo ho so ho* in each of these paintings, I have taken a verse from a Sufi master and have attempted to interpret the meaning visually in my own context and have imprinted calligraphy (in *Devnagri*). So, when, you see *jo ho so ho* coming out in broken alphabets from the hands of the subject – it is interpretation of abject surrender by the individual to the love.





Rab
(Realization)

Rab bandey vich aivey vasda,
Jinve kapde vich roo
Aape aap noo waja maarey
Aap kare hoo hoo

(Baba Bulleh Shah)

(Realization is so close.. Just look inside yourself-You are already Realized!)

It's so transparent, so visible that actually it can be felt. It is not next to me- what it conveys is, it is me.. Divine feeling of oneness is imbibed just as cotton hides in the basic fabric- The substance is woven into the basic fabric.

We shout out, call ourselves and reply ourselves tied in our own web of ego. So you see ,we see this image looking through a misty screen getting clearer and on the edge is a spread of calligraphy.

Jo ho so ho
(Within and Without)

Ishq mein tere kohe gham
Sar pe liye, jo ho so ho
Aisho nishaat zindagi
Chhod diya jo ho so ho

(Hafeez)

Now that I have decided to seek you, I will search regardless of what happens to me.)

It's one thought at the very root level to be in harmony. My hands you see here - relaxed, folding, and unfolding thoughts within - All is yours - the boldness of the image that you see has a subtle softness to be one with silence. No shades of colours — just black, gray and white. No waves remaining at all. So you see the red element only in the backdrop, leaving behind the noise, just as if you dive deep into the ocean, there are no waves. The deeper you go, the calmer, the more graceful, the more peaceful you get.

This transparency of thought and self is the Sufi state the Zen, the pure stroke of brush the sublime flow of music.... .... the journey goes on.

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Romain Maitra

Cultural Observances in Assam

Assam accounts for a very large number of festivals which have a socio-economic significance. Bihu festivals have a strong fertility symbolism. There are a number of communities of which some members have converted to other religions such as Christianity etc. and this is on a larger scale than any other part of the country.

The oral traditions of Assam are vibrant. The folk songs and dances are performed by both men and women on a wide scale. This is also true of folklore, and folktales.The spread of the music that goes with it accounts for the more widespread use of instruments. Western music is popular among the Christian segments.

Assam is one of the oldest treasures of dance traditions in India. Though a continuous history of Assam is not traceable beyond the Ahom rule, it can be learnt from the available records that Assam has a long and rich tradition of dance and music. Existence of a specific dance form in Pragjyotishpura has been mentioned in Bharata's *Natyashastra*. Historical inscriptions, sculptural relics, and texts like *Kalikapurana* and *Yoginitantra* cite many references to vocal music, musical instruments and dance. Nandikeswara's *Abhinava Darpana* states in the introductory verse that Usha, the daughter of Banasura, is the first disciple of Parvati, the goddess of



dance, who is the consort of Shiva Nataraja, the Lord of dance. In the 7th century AD, Hiuen Tsang, while living as the Chinese guest of the great king of Kamarupa Bhaskar Verman, was entertained with dance and music every day throughout the month of his stay.

Till recently, there was a tradition of presenting dances as part of worship in temples like Hajo, Parihareshwar, Bishwanath, and Dergaon. A part of the temple dance of Parihareshwar is presented as *Devadasi* dance under the initiative of Shri Ratna Talukdar who has revived this dying dance. Even now, the *Deodhani* and *Deodha* dances are performed before the altar of the snake goddess Manasha in the Kamakhya temple once a year. *Deodhani* is also an integral part of *Maroi puja*. The *Deodhani* dancer, an unmarried woman, and a devotee of goddess Padma, dresses like a female warrior and keeps her hair loose while dancing before the deity. She dances with gestures of hand and intricate footwork to the accompaniment of big drums (*Joidhol*) and cymbals. With the dance rising to a crescendo, the danseuse loses her senses and becomes unconscious in the grip, as popular belief maintains, of supernatural power, regaining her senses to continue to sing the last portion of the songs, describing how Padma gave life back to Lakhindar.

It is interesting, however, to note that dances in Assam follow the natural movement of men. In all classical dances in the rest of India, the gestures of the right hand are accompanied by footwork of the right foot and vice versa, which is the opposite of natural movements. But in the dances of Assam, the natural movement is often retained: movements of the right hand accompanies footwork of the left.



Ojapali, as one of the oldest rituals of the valley, is one of the oldest form of Assamese dances. It is narrative in character. *Oja* is the leader of the band of musician-cum-dancers who, through a wide variety of hand gestures and movements, demonstrates *puranic* episodes while the Palis or his assistants support the *Oja* by singing in chorus. The principal assistant is known as *Dainapali*. All the mediums of expressions, i.e. *angika* (gestures), *vachika* (speeches or songs), *aharya* (costume and make-up), and *satvika* (outward manifestation of the psychic mind), supported by *laya* and *tala*, are present in this dance. It is said that he is the only good Oja who, with songs in his lips, gestures in hands and rhythm on his feet, goes round like Garuda. Though presented in folk manner, the *Ojapali* dance can be grouped into classical form according to the basic concept of classical dance of India. This dance is an indispensable part of *Maroi puja* or the worship of snake goddess Manasha. In the wake of the neo-Vaishnavite movement led by the saint poet Shri Shankaradeva, this dance form adapted themes of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The thematic change made this form of dance to be popularly known as *Biahar Oja*. However, *Ojapali* is most popular in Kamrup district and Mangaldoi area of Darrang district.

Shankaradeva toured the length and breadth of India and brought to Assam various forms of arts and crafts, including puppetry (he is known to be the first man to bring puppetry from outside and propagate it in Assam) that he came across and absorbed during his long journey. *Sattriya* dance, the only recognised classical dance form of Assam, was introduced by Shri Shankaradeva, and later by Shri Madhavadeva and Shri Damodaradeva. This dance contains both *nritta*, and *nritya*. The former is an intricate abstract dance consisting of stylised movements and poses having a fixed expression and devoid of dramatic content. It includes *chali jhumura, nadubhangi, natua, baha*, etc. The latter includes dances of dramatic representations with every interpretative movement and gesture suggestive of some meaning. There are three principal styles (*gharanas*) in this dance form — the Kamalabari style, the Dakhinpat style, and more or less the uniform style of all other *satras*. Most of the *Sattriya* dances are vigorous and masculine rather than delicate and feminine, perhaps, for the reason that women were not allowed to participate in these dances. Till recently, the dances were the preserve of the monks of the *sattras*. The participation of women in this dance is of very recent origin.

As a veritable museum of tribes, Assam had been in the crux of streams of races invading and migrating in this state since time immemorial. Although most of the tribes which settled down here have lost most of their original characters due to an inevitable sequel to assimilation, some traces of their original behavioural traits still do linger. Thus, every tribe has definite dances based on some magical belief or the other. The specimens of these dances are not fossilized but are very much living. Like all the folk dances of the world, Assamese folk dances not only aim at relaxation and merry-making but are also part and parcel of social organization and religion. Celebrating the *Bihu* dance, for example, is common to almost all the tribes. Other dances are grouped according to the names of the tribe.

The chief amusements of the people of Assam are community dancing and singing, stage acting called *bhawanas* and buffalo fights etc. These forms of merry-making are mostly connected with the *Bihu*, a popular agricultural festival. These *Bihus* are supposed to be of Austro-Asiatic origin and their influence on the Assamese culture, though imperceptible, is potent. The Austro-Asiatic people were well-versed in the art of cultivation : they raise a crops of vegetable roots, betel nuts and betel leaves. There are three *Bihus*, the *Bohag*, the *Kati*, and the *Magh*, being celebrated at different periods and cycles of the year and nature. In point of importance and ceremony, the *Bohag Bihu* or *Rongali Bihu* is the foremost of them all. It is celebrated with the advent of the Assamese new year in the middle of April and usually goes on for seven days. The first day of the month of the *Bohag* is known as *Manuh Bihu* or bihu for men. The *Manuh Bihu* continues for seven days and on the first day all members of the family take a bath. The junior members show respect to their seniors and the female members of the family present *bihuwan* (home-made *gamocha*) to the male members of the household as well as to friends and relatives, which is the most significant aspect of this *Bihu*. On that day, people do not take rice during the daytime. From the next day of *Bihu*, people start visiting friends and relatives. Folk songs and

dances are performed by the young during the *bihu* days which are known as '*husori*'. Instrumental music is provided by the *dhol* (small drum), the *pepa* (buffalo horn), and the *toka*.

The last day of the month of *Chaitra* is called the day of *uruka* or in the local term *Goru Bihu*, i.e. bihu for cattle. On the *Goru Bihu* day, the cattle are anointed with turmeric and *matikalai* pastes along with mustard oil before they are bathed in nearby ponds and rivers by the villagers, collectively. When the cattle return home in the evening, a fire is lit with straw in front of the entrance to the cowshed. They are also given new ropes.

The period till the seventh day, known as '*Sat Bihu*' has a special significance for its members in common with the rest of the Assamese society. Social visits, prayers at sacred places and at community prayer halls continue on all these days. On the seventh day, it is customary to eat '*satsak*' (seven varieties of leafy vegetables). Folk dances are common in the social life of Assam and with the approach of this *Bihu* in April, every individual is enlivened with a new spirit. The drum beats produce rhythmic music that appeals to the mind and body; the buffalo horn blows and rouses the softer instincts of the young hearts of both sexes and draws them into the golden world of dreams, aspirations, and passions, converging in *Bihugeets* (Bihu songs) and *Bongeets* (songs of wilderness). These songs are, for the most part, youthful vibrations and are woven around themes of love, youth and nature.

The *Kati Bihu* or *Kangali Bihu* is the most insignificant of the three Bihus in point of ceremony and importance. It is celebrated on the first day of the Assamese month *kati* (mid-October), and it synchronizes with the time when the green shoots spring up in the field. Prospects for new harvests induce the farmers to pray to the goddess presiding over paddy, their principal crop. Significantly, *tulashi* plants are worshipped and earthen lamps are lighted up in the paddy fields, vegetable gardens and plants around the homestead. The *Magh Bihu* or *Bhogali Bihu* is celebrated in the middle of winter (mid-January) after the harvest is completed, with bonfires and social gatherings and feasts. It is called the



"Harvest Home". On this day, just after an early morning bath, the men set fire to the *meji* or *bhela ghar*. Then they go straight to the *namghar* or prayer hall for worship. On the previous night known as *uruka*, the people, irrespective of caste or community, arrange a community feast.

The *Bihu* dances have created a number of indigenous musical instruments *dhols* or the native drum that invariably accompanies the dances, enjoys great popularity. There are people who command a considerable proficiency in playing them. Maghai Uja, a peasant artist, has acquired a celebrated reputation for his proficiency in the art of drum playing. The *Mahar Sinohar Pepa* (an indigenous flute made of the buffalo horn) is played with *Bihu* dances and adds its haunting melody to the atmosphere of *Bihu*'s joy and delight.

The Bihu dances and songs are a mirthful representation of the agricultural life of the people. The most striking feature of the *Bihu* festival is the singing of folksongs. As the *Bihu* festival is, in more than one respect, a worship of nature, so

too the *Bihu* songs signify the natural amorous tendencies of young people desirous of fulfilling the innate drive for union between the opposite sexes.

The Bodos of the plains have an intricate pattern of indigenous dances; they are mainly associated with a ritual called *Kheraipuja*. The instruments that accompany these dances are similarly indigenous. A flute called *Chifung* is most attractive. The *Gogana* (a flute) which is common among the Assamese plains is also used by the Bodos. The Bodo dance is varied and colourful. There are also *Rabhas*, the harvest dances, *Mishing* which is, perhaps, the softest, *Karbi* which is vigorous, *Deuria* which is ritualistic, and *Goalpara* which is folk ritualistic.

The *bhawana* (folk drama), an important feature of folk culture, is a popular Vaishnavite stage performance introduced by Shankaradeva. A cycle of dramas, music and songs has grown round it,. It has at the same time given birth to a new class of music called *ankianat geet*. The songs are of a devotional content and inspiration, as are *Borgits*, a cycle of Vaishnavite devotional hymns. They are sung at the village *namghar* or congregational prayer halls; the *damghars* constitute the venue of the devotional dramas. The Sutradhar dance is an integral part of the mythological dramas. The Ojapali dances, mostly popular in western Assam, and of non-Vaishnavite origin, are other significant items in the state's cultural life; they are usually associated with the serpent goddess Manasha.



There are a number of tribal dances beside Manipuri dance in Assam. Of these, the Naga headhunters dance, the Karbi death celebration dance (*Chomankan*) and the Bodo Kherai dance are the most popular. Kherai, the festival of dance and music, is performed before the season of cultivation begins in the month of May or June, with all the austere character of a religious ritual. The *Wangalo* of the Garos is, in a sense, a harvest festival, performed in the month of September, after the harvest is completed. The tea garden communities of Assam namely, Oraon, Munda, Santal and others, observe the *Karam* festival. It is celebrated in August at the climax of the monsoon when paddy is standing in the fields but grown up tall enough. It marks a period of relaxation between the arduous work of transplanting of paddy and the rigours of the harvest, and is possibly a fecundity festival to help the ripening of the crop.

Now *Durga puja* is celebrated throughout the length and breadth of the state. It is an autumn festival. The followers of *Mahapurushia dharma*, however, do not observe *Durga puja*. They celebrate *Janmashtami* (Lord Krishna's birthday), *Dol Jatra (Dewl* or *Phakna* or *Holi*), *Rasapurnima*, (full moon during *Rasapurnima*) and the saints' days (*Tithis* death anniversaries of Shankaradeva, Madhavadeva, Damodaradeva and Harideva. The Vaishnavas worship Lord Krishna as their main god. However, in recent times, it has been observed that a section of the community worships Lord Shiva. The major sacred centres of the community are the *sattras*, *namghar*, and temples where they worship their gods and goddesses and perform namprasanga (prayer)

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■



Her Voice

Geeta Chandran

The just concluded twentieth century has given us the legacy of having been the bloodiest century ever for mankind. Innumerable lives were lost and pain inflicted on countless men, women and children. The impact of war and conflict on families is too horrible to enumerate in its gory detail.

War and revenge keep recurring in inevitable cycles. Here, in the Indian subcontinent, armed skirmishes and battles have continued on the Indo-Pak border. The fear of terrorism has reared its hydra-head. Violence and terror operate in seemingly inevitable cycles, and there seems to be no sane end to this cycle of one-upmanship and revenge.

But more worrisome than violence being enshrined in concepts and perceptions of nation-hood and national honour, violence is also becoming an accepted way of life. Through film, television, internet and media reports of gang-warfare and mafia tactics, violence seems to have everybody in its thrall. The growing environment of political violence is probably at the base-root of this culture of violence. Those worst-hit by this cult of violence are women and children who continue to be the most disempowered and marginalized members of society and who seem to have no voice in such vital issues that concern them most intimately.

Our key lament is that:
*"Every sense is
invaded by war.
The smell of war.
The sound of war.
The feel of war.
The sight of war.
The taste of war.
Has this war
invaded our genes?"*

It is with all these ideas in the background that puppeteer Anurupa Roy and I created **Her Voice,** which became a unique and path-breaking collaborative performance melding dance and puppetry.

The impulse for its creation was when Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath (Honorary Director of WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace, a forum that offers women a chance to play a visible role in engendering peace), was organizing its first international Summer Symposium on Human Security in the New Millennium in New Delhi, 21-26 August, 2000. Dr. Gopinath wanted to involve the creative forces in society in the wider peace dialogue, and invited us to conceptualise and create a performance for her symposium on human security.

We probed tenets of Indian cultural perceptions of war and violence, and how they impacted our collective psyche. Inevitably, we were drawn to the metaphorical war of Kurukshetra from the epic *Mahabharata* - labelled the *Dharma* war. We looked at that mythical war differently, through the eyes of its key female protagonist, Draupadi (who is said to be the cause of the war) and analysed the pain and grief that she goes through during the war.



In our production, Draupadi accepts that she instigated the notion of revenge but in a major turning point in her own understanding and evolution, rejects revenge since it only unleashes more pain and further misery. Re-



jecting the patriarchical vision of the war we see the horror of war through Draupadi's eyes, and enumerate the horrible personal costs she bears as the deaths mount in the war. It is a dark presentation. Draupadi remains caught in the see-saw of avenge and revenge until she rejects the vicious cycle for a more conscious peace.

The production did not focus on the *Mahabharata* narrative. But it used Draupadi - representing a power-broker of the state who urges war, and examines her psychology when the costs of the war she inspires are most paid by her. The maturing of Draupadi in realizing the futility of war and conflict became the basis of **Her Voice.** It became women's plea to the world to see war and conflict through human misery indicators and to try create a more peaceful world. The performance reiterated our conviction that war resolves nothing. And the human race - and especially the women - pay a very high price for using war as an instrument of *realpolitik*. Drawing on our research and analysis of Draupadi's inner dilemmas and conflicts, and splicing those narratives with our own creative instincts and convictions, Anurupa and I attempted to make **Her Voice** a contemporary manifesto for sanity in an incrementally insane world.

Her Voice postulates that there can never be a moral war - neither for *dharma* nor as *jehad.*

What **Her Voice** showcased is that we need to better understand gender roles (especially masculinity) in the general debate on war and peace and conflict. Does conflict reflect a masculine identity and militarism? Can such analysis lead us to a better vision of security and peaceful coexistence? Can women's participation and representation in war and peace discussions make a difference? How can women be more intrinsically involved in peace issues?

Her Voice thus throws the spotlight on the inner dilemmas of Draupadi, blamed in traditional patriarchical discourses as *Kritya*, or cause of bloodshed. By contrast, in this performance we have presented a vulnerable

Draupadi who is disraught about her personal losses in the battlefield. The death of her favourite son Abhimanyu tears her; but so does the death of her enemy Karna. If the death of Dushasana avenged her insult, the bathing in his blood fills her with utter disgust. But her human nature makes her seek revenge when Ashwathama secretly kills the last of her five children. But suddenly she realizes that killing Ashwathama would render *his* mother sonless, and another woman would undergo a similar loss and suffer the same acute pain. This realization becomes the turning point of this performance. "*Muchyate Muchyate*" (let him live - let him go) is Draupadi's cry from the *Mahabharata*. The realization of another human being's suffering becomes the quintessence of the performance.

The performance brought together two art forms - dance and puppetry. It has been visualised at many concurrent levels: the puppets become metaphors for our alter-egos and also represent mute bystanders. The dancer dons the role of Draupadi and also becomes the voice of sanity in an incrementally insane world. Dance is vibrant and energetic; the puppets are inanimate. The process of relating the two evolved through a close collaboration between Anurupa and myself. The dance changed and became mellow; the puppets became animated and took on shades of *abhinaya*.

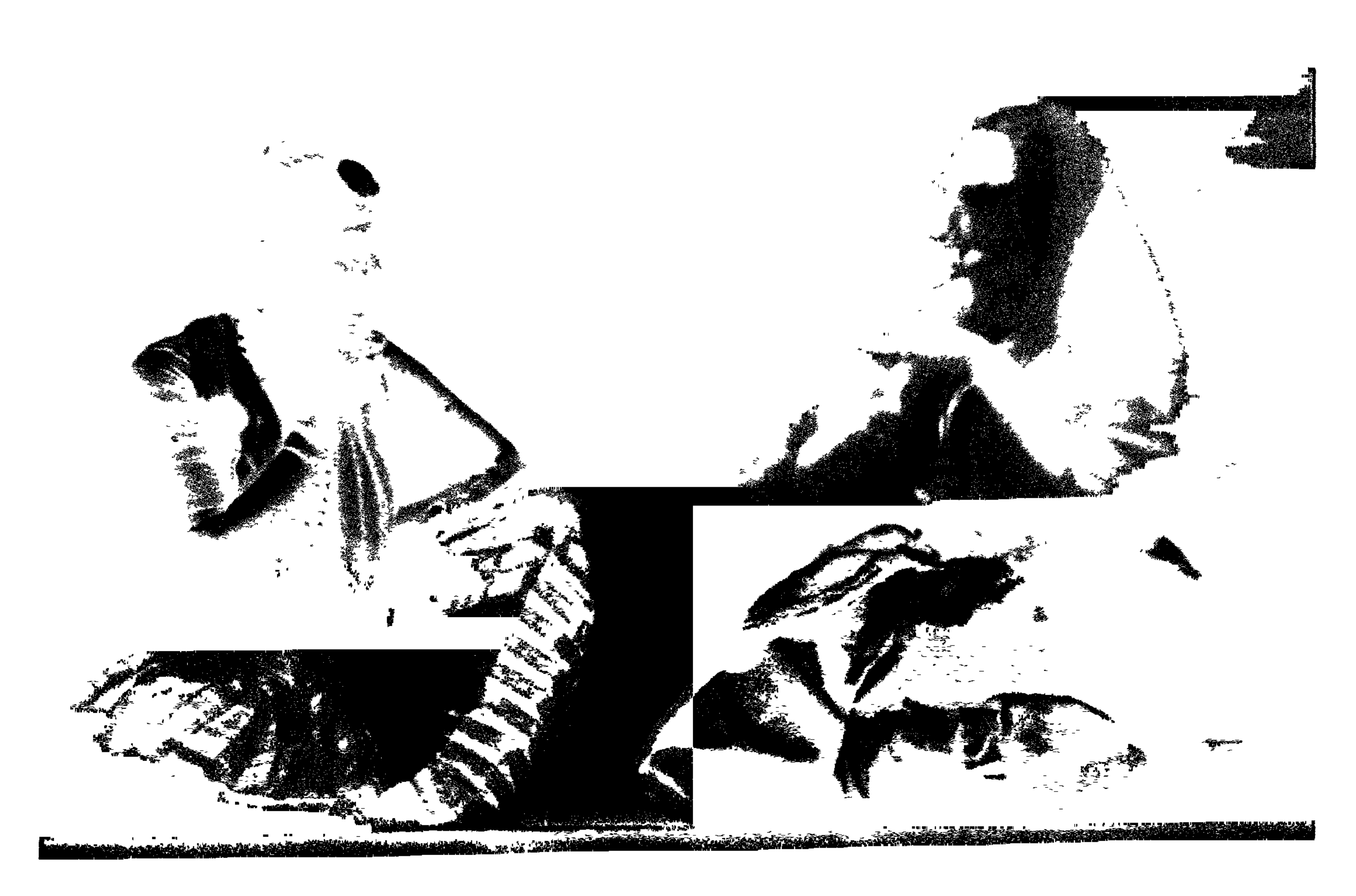


Her Voice went beyond surface juxtapositioning of two art forms to create true meanings in performance collaboration. The entire visualisation of the theme evolved keeping in mind both art forms. The interactions between the dance company and the puppet company grew as an organic and respectful process without undue primacy given to either in the eventual production. As artists, such collaboration was meaningful and we continuously made efforts to preserve the originality and quality of synthesis underlying the process of this

collaboration. Personally, **Her Voice** proved to me that such a sensitive collaboration was possible.

As sensitive artists, the performance brought us into analysing why the traditional arts in India had always enshrined war and conflict as heroic and pro-masculine. We developed a script with a feminine point of view that war resolves nothing and that women - half of the world - suffer more because of war and conflict.

In retrospect, the performance altered us in many ways. It led us into a collaboration that we had not thought was possible - classical dance meeting puppetry on equal terms. The opportunity helped me to push the frontiers of my dance style, and go beyond the usual parameters of classical dance; from being merely decorative and narrative to becoming a powerful tool of new-age communication.



It also made us work on a sound-track which had to lend itself to both art forms – which was truly a challenge, and I must record that Shyam Banerji's work in creating the sound-track was an amazing spurt of musical creativity. Besides, when one breaks away from the format dancing, one needs to step back and take a perspective view as to what would suit the situation and context best. Adhering to the theme, reacting to a different sounding track, working with life-sized puppets, were all completely new experiences which taught me and my team of dancers how to approach new frontiers in the performing arts.

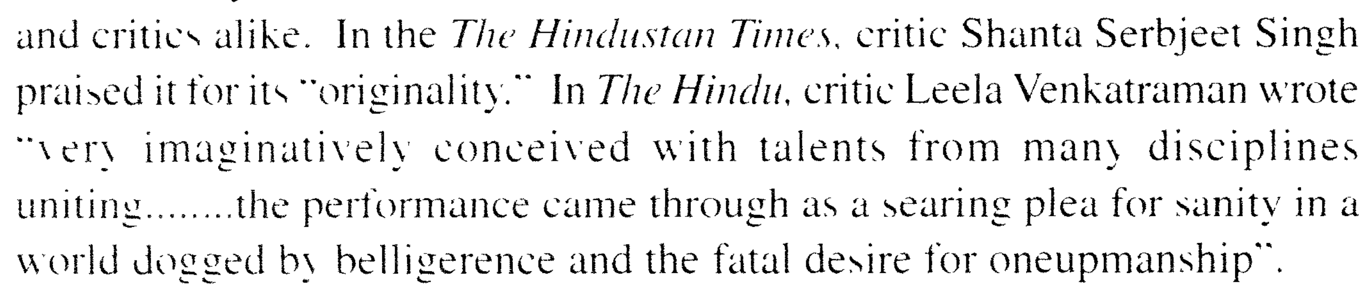
Her Voice is the sane response of women to an incrementally insane world!

As a performing artist it was also personally satisfying since the production was able to survive the typical "one-time performance" syndrome and it was mainstreamed in many major conferences and dance events in India. Since its WISCOMP premiere, **Her Voice** was presented at the first Journey to the East Conference of the Asia-Pacific Performance Art Network. In August 2001, **Her Voice** was presented in Chennai by the International Women's Association and Arangham Trust. In November 2001, the performance was presented at the VIII Asia Pacific Regional Conference on Voluntarism, New Delhi. In February 2002, **Her Voice** was included in the Uday Shankar Shatabdi Samaroh organized by the national Sangeet Natak Akademi in Kolkata. In October 2003 it was presented at the International Conference on Gender, Conflict Resolution and Development, in Pilani, Rajasthan. Her

Voice was also performed in colleges to raise youth awareness against war and conflict.

The collaborative process gripped both teams of artists and made us all aware of the need to keep our eyes and ears open to subtle issues that affect all of us deeply and taught us to be engaged and be alive to crucial issues of peace and development.

Her Voice was critically acclaimed by both audience and critics alike. In the *The Hindustan Times*, critic Shanta Serbjeet Singh praised it for its "originality." In *The Hindu*, critic Leela Venkatraman wrote "very imaginatively conceived with talents from many disciplines uniting........the performance came through as a searing plea for sanity in a world dogged by belligerence and the fatal desire for oneupmanship".



Is war the single emotion that rules us all? Never Shringara - only the other horrible rasa. Each one of them echoing of war, of victory and of defeat.

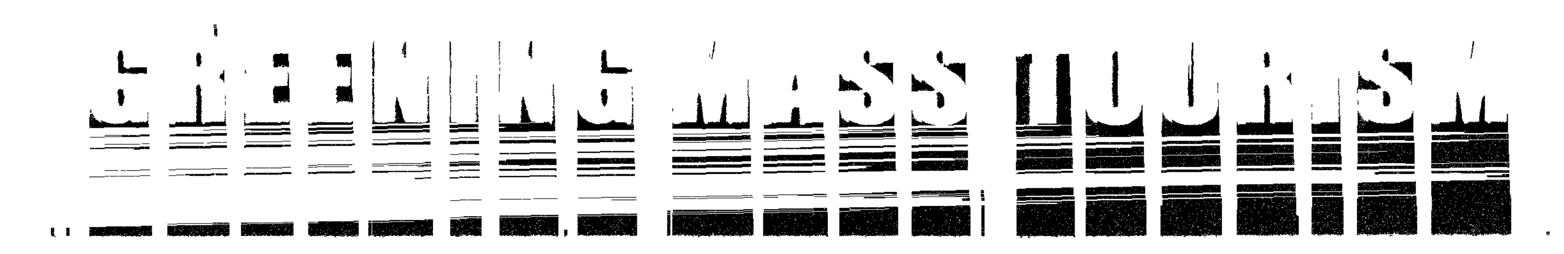
The Navarasas

- **Veeram**
- **Roudram**
- **Bhayam**
- **Karunyam**
- **Beebhatsam**
- **Adbhutam**
- **Atahasam and even the Shantam of stony death**

Was man made for war? Only for war?

About the Author

Geeta Chandran is one of India's foremost exponents of Bharatanatyam. Founder-President of Natya Vriksha, Geeta Chandran is celebrated not only for her deep and composite understanding of the art of Bharatanatyam, but also for her Carnatic music (she is an accomplished vocalist), her work in television, video and film, theatre, choreography, dance-education and dance-issue journalism. In her unique dance presentations, Geeta skillfully weaves abstract notions of Joy, Beauty, Religion, Values and Myth. She engages in the widest range of dance-related activities: performing, teaching, conducting, singing, collaborating, writing and speaking to new youth audiences.



Mandip Singh Soin

FRGS Founder & Managing Director

efinition of Ecotourism - "*Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people.*"

The other more detailed definition is - " *Environmentally Responsible Travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active, socio economic involvement of local populations.*"

Though we have witnessed a growing awareness for environmental concerns in the Indian tourism industry, we are really far from being a 'smokeless industry'! And, yet, even at a business level, it demands for us to preserve the very resource that tourism thrives on – the physical and cultural environment, the cultural values and of course, our heritage and bio diversity.

Hopefully, once we understand aspects of the intricate laws of Nature, and those that govern us as good Earth citizens, not only would we find it rewarding financially in one's operations, but also being a form of service to our globe which would make us feel good as a human being and thus, we may become more 'centred' individuals. As that happens, we will be able to touch our spiritual core and evolve our consciousness to become a better humanity.

It must be recognised that conventional mass tourism is still the mainstream of the tourism industry and it is quite probable that this situation will prevail for some time. For this reason it is vitally important to aim our attention on mass tourism, striving to apply measures to make it more environmentally friendly and minimising its negative impacts on biodiversity.

We should not consider only Ecotourism linkages with biodiversity conservation, but also linkages of mass tourism, especially the effects of big hotels on the environment and how their design and operation can become more environmentally friendly. At a global scale, perhaps providing a number of eco lodges is not going to make much of a difference– ultimately we have to affect the larger tourism industry. This means we have to consider how to improve the environmental record of very different items like airlines, airports, big amusement and theme parks, golf courses, and sports stadia.

Again, the private sector has an enormous responsibility in providing environmentally friendly hotel design, construction and operational methods.

As tourism numbers grow, all stake holders need to start with a simple set of environment guidelines that can evolve into Environmental Management Systems (EMS), be it the National or State Tourism Boards/ Governments, Hotels, Airlines, Railways, Transporters, Cruise Liners, Tour Operators and the Media as well.

Training to develop skills of tour operators, hotel owners and others to understand what sustainable tourism is and education about best practices are vital activities There is a need to strengthen and to revise legislation so that this approach is well understood and widely disseminated. Environmental legislation should act as a motivation force, and also as a base for certification. Also, a widespread educational campaign so that tourists will be demanding environmentally friendly services, is urgently needed.

It is vital to disseminate codes of ethics for conventional tourists, which will serve as a tool for alleviation of negative impacts. In analysing mass tourism impacts, both new tourism facilities and pre-existing tourism facilities must be considered. In the former case, the application of minimal environmental standards for siting of new tourism services and facilities is urgently required. In the latter case, methods for improving the operation, making it more environmentally friendly, should be applied, through retrofitting or adding new, more appropriate technologies. In every case, the benefits to the tourism sector (market demand, economics, effective management) must be persuasively demonstrated

It is not a matter of sanctions and pressuring, rather encouraging the tourism sector to become more environmentally friendly. For example, water heating in many conventional hotels is currently very inefficient and costly, so that wide use of alternative energy sources should be more than welcome by mainstream tourism operations. Many traditional beach destinations are experiencing a loss of repeat visitors because of water pollution, so that more environmentally friendly practices are definitely in the interest of beach resort owners and operators.

ECODESIGN OF TOURISM FACILITIES

A new approach to architecture and physical facilities planning is needed, not only in tourism, but also in all human activities, if we are really going to stop the irreversible damage to the environment, further pollution, and depletion of energy sources. This new approach should be based on the concept of *eco design*, which may be defined as "any form of design that minimises negative environmental impacts, by integrating itself into the surrounding ecosystem."

Tourism facilities should be particularly designed in an environmentally friendly way, since they are frequently located in areas of great scenic beauty and ecological significance. Application of appropriate waste treatment methods and the use of alternative energy sources (especially in remote locations) are especially important items to be considered. Physical facilities should be technologically viable and adequate, and also socially acceptable and economically feasible. Joint ventures, communication and working with funding agencies can assist with addressing the expense of technologies. Physical planning and building (planning for expansion) should always be long-term endeavours.

It is important to remember that economic benefits come from environmentally friendly facilities and technologies.

Eco lodges are often located in remote and wild areas, and therefore very few typical infrastructure elements and services found in more traditional settings are available, such as access by paved highway, public transportation services, electric and telephone lines, piped potable water, public drainage and sewage, refuse collection and disposal, nearby school and medical services, shopping areas, etc.

For this reason, a totally new and different approach to physical planning is required, one based on a high level of functional, energy and food self-sufficiency. Before designing and building an eco lodge, realistically and clearly identify the specific characteristics of isolation and difficulty of access to infrastructure elements and public services and define beforehand the level of self-sufficiency you wish or need to attain.

Many nature tourists do not expect, in a poor rural area, the facilities found in rich cities and beach resorts. Some enjoy roughing it for a while, and are even prepared to pay more for the privilege. Certain standards will always remain non-negotiable though – especially security and basic hygiene.

It is always important to harmonise tourism facilities with the surrounding environment (both natural and cultural), using architectural forms in harmony with the natural landscape (vegetation and land forms), designing with long-term environmental criteria. A tourism facility should always possess a sense of place.

SITE PLANNING

Site planning and design is a process that involves in an integrated way the issues of land use, human circulation, structures, facilities and utilities within the natural and human environment. In order to ensure harmony between tourism developments and environmental protection, it is indispensable to apply sensitive design of infrastructure, master site planning, ecologically and socially conscious site design, and landscaping.

Preserving the special characteristics of a tourism destination demands an in-depth understanding of the natural systems on the site, as well as an immersion into the time-tested cultural responses to that environment's opportunities and constraints. If we want to change the way we build conventional tourism facilities, we need a new way of thinking about site planning and design, which involves a holistic approach. Sustainable site planning and design can lead to a better integration of physical facilities for tourism and their site and surroundings and can indeed help to lessen the environmental impact of these facilities.

Site planning and design for any tourism facility must clearly indicate the process of ordering human actions and works in a specific tract of land. In addition to constituting a graphic representation (to scale) that shows location, layout, general size and shape, and orientation of the different elements of the project, site planning and design should indicate the sequence of activities that make up the project, clearly establishing a space-time interaction. Also, it should ensure that all on-site human activities should have a minimum negative impact on the natural and human environment.

Considering the increasing visitation to wilderness areas over the past decade and the resultant effects on the carrying capacities of the ecosystems, it would be prudent to select sites for developing Ecotourism facilities that are situated just outside the nature preserves, although this is not always possible since some of the preserves are very large.

What are eco lodges? Since the term eco lodges emerged in the early 1990's, there have been several interpretations. It is the basic principles that differentiate eco lodges from traditional hotels. The

design of an ecology and the activities provided within the facility should encourage close interaction with the natural and cultural environment and have an atmosphere that is appropriate to the site's specific setting. It is this atmosphere that is one of the key ingredients in distinguishing eco lodges from traditional facilities. There are ten basic principles that need to be considered for eco lodges. Ecology should:

1. Help in the conservation of the surrounding flora and fauna
2. Have minimal impact on the natural surroundings during construction
3. Fit into its specific physical and cultural contexts through careful attention to form, landscaping and color, as well as the use of vernacular architecture
4. Use alternative, sustainable means of water acquisition and reduces water consumption
5. Provide for careful handling and disposal of solid waste and sewage
6. Meet its energy needs through passive design and renewable energy sources
7. Use traditional building technology and materials wherever possible and combines these with their modern counterparts for greater sustainability
8. Endeavour to work together with the local community
9. Offer interpretive programs to educate both its employees and tourists about the surrounding natural and cultural environments
10. Contribute to sustainable local development through education programs and research.

THE CURRENT STATE

After a lull in development as a result of the worldwide recession of the early nineties, eco lodges have sprung -up in all corners of the world and the tourism industry is to say the least, flourishing with eco lodges.

Innovative developers and designers are synthesizing traditional and hi-tech concepts for land and site planning, architectural design, construction, and are creating plans that, incorporate local community involvement, show increasing sensitivity to existing ecosystems and that bring about financial gains. By blending the wisdom of the past with the know-how and technology of the present, eco lodges are being built that provide healthy and comfortable places to enjoy nature, as well as buildings that camouflage with the surroundings, conserve material resources in their construction, save energy and water resources in their operation and most importantly, involve the native population through the design, construction and operation processes.

Majority of government agencies around the world do not have specific regulations or minimum standards for eco lodge design and development and therefore it has fallen on the landscape architects, architects and interior designers, to develop their own design criteria and codes of ethics that guarantee the least environmental and social impact, as well as having a harmonious and sustainable interaction between the physical structure and the surrounding environment.

The eco lodge industry is increasingly confronted with arguments about it's sustainability and compatibility with environmental protection and community development and is facing serious and difficult choices about it's future. If we are to move positively from these crossroads, lodge owners and operators will also be required to rise to the challenges and demands of activities that give the visitors a natural unspoiled experience that affords them a non-polluted environment close to nature

If we are to create a sustainable world - one in which we are truly responsible for the needs of the coming generations of humans and all living creatures - we must recognize that our present ways of doing architecture, engineering and construction present serious shortcomings. To develop a sustainable world, we must inevitably transform these practices. We need to impregnate the design of products, buildings and landscapes with a rich and detailed understanding of ecology. Sustainability needs to be rooted firmly in the more minute details of design

The human population is presently living far beyond the carrying capacity of the Earth. The one thing we can do as sensitive developers and designers is to truly be the stewards of the land and we will be able to prolong our own extinction. There is a lot to learn from the indigenous tribes of the world and their relationship to mother earth. Their landscapes were "one with the land" and we do not see why we should not be able to use these principles for the design of Ecotourism facilities.

Two years into the new millennium, there is a sense of optimism that eco lodges are on the upswing. There are no real surveys to point to, but one could feel the tremendous energy at Ecotourism conferences in the past three years. All this bodes well for the fledgling eco tourism industry in the days to come.

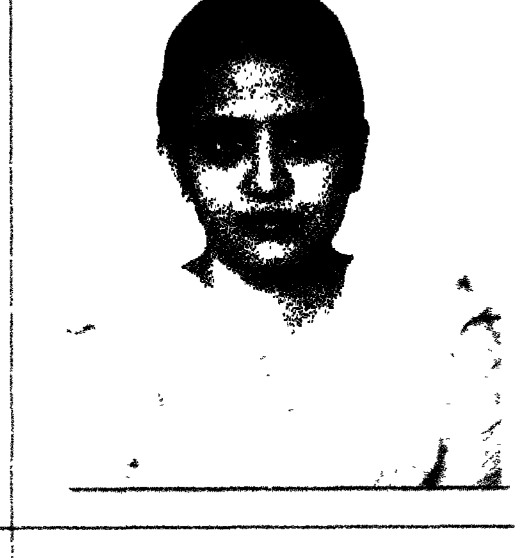
Indian Horizons Poetry Contest

International Women's Day
March 8, 2004



First Prize Winner
Ms. Meena Kandasamy
Rs.10.000.00





Second Prize Winner
Ms. Monica Dhawan
Rs. 5.000.00

Third Prize Winner
Dr. Priya
Rs. 3,000.00





Third Prize Winner
Ms. Netra Shyam
Rs. 3,000.00

Jury Members

Dr. (Ms) Sukrita Paul Kumar, Dr. Aruna Sitesh, Smt. Mandira Ghosh. Dr. H.K. Kaul



The last thing she does
before she gets ready to die-
once more, of violation,
she applies the Mascara.
Always,
in that last and solemn moment
the call-girl hesitates.

With eye-catching eyes
she stops to shudder.
Maybe, the dyed eyes
mourn her body's sins.

Mascara...
it serves to tell her
that long buried
hazy dreams
of a virgin soul
have dark outlines.

Silently she cries
Her tears are black,
Like her.

Somewhere
Long ago
in an
untraceable
mangled
matrilineal
family tree
of temple prostitutes,
her solace was sought.
It has happened for centuries..
"Empty consolations soothe
violated bodies."

Sex clings to her *devdasi* skin,
assumed superficialities don't wear off.
Deliverance doesn't arrive.
Unknown legacies of
Love made to Gods
haven't been ceremoniously accounted
as *karma*.
But still she prays.
Her prayer words
desperately provoke answers.

Fighting her case,
Providence lost his pride.
Her helplessness doesn't
Seduce the Gods.
And they too
never learn
the depth of her dreams.

She believes-
Cosmetics were
once...
War paints.
She awaits their resurrection.

When she dons the Mascara
The Heavens have heard her whisper,
Kali, you wear this too...

Meena Kandasamy
Ist Prize

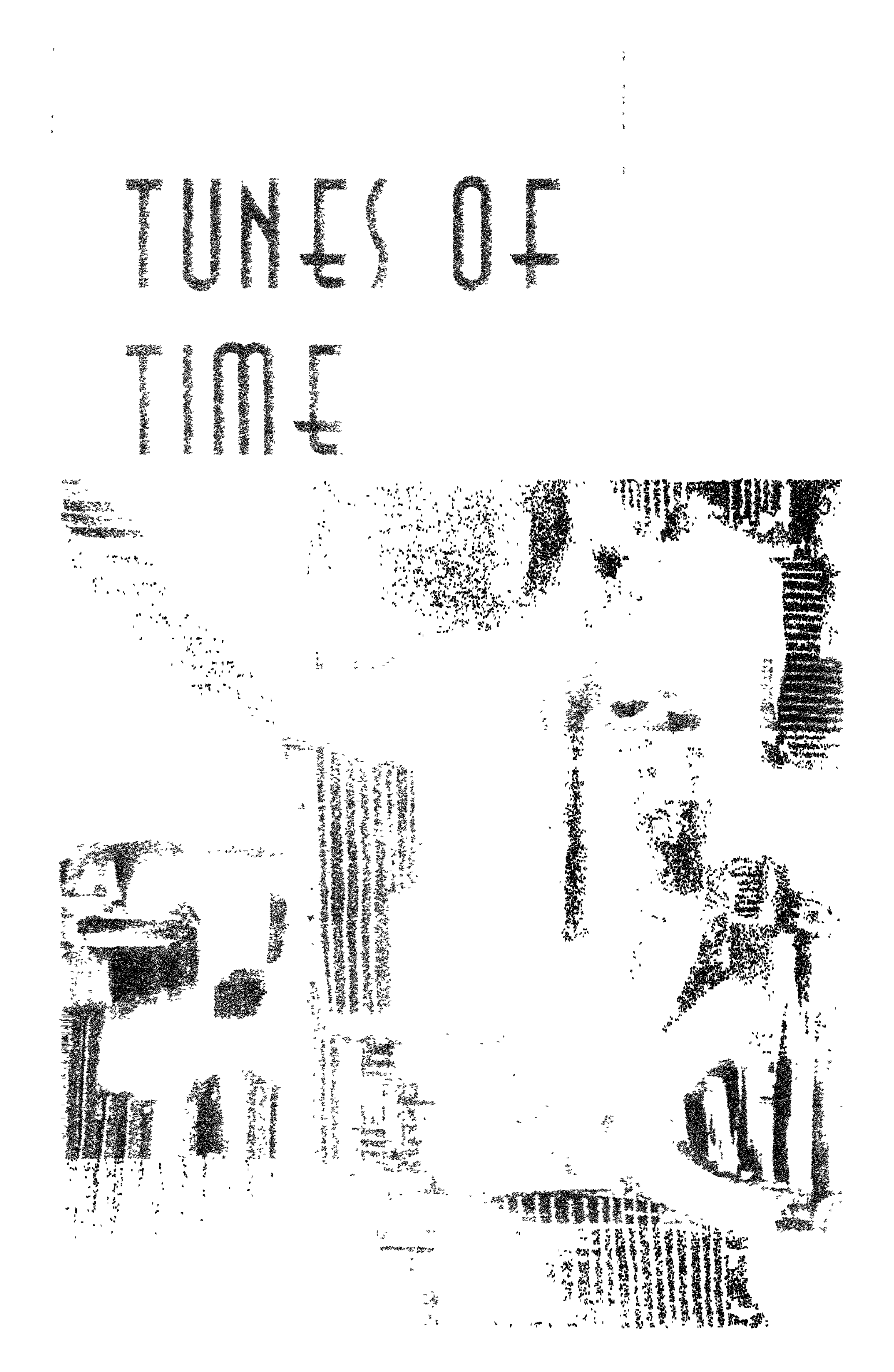


The Moon

When I stand on tip-toe
Precariously balanced atop
The jutting edge of a lone rock
Glistening in the faded night
With angry waves splashing about
And a storm riding high
The sharp wind tears at my clothes
And pierces like icicles into my naked skin
I stretch my thin, bare arms above
Palms open
And reach out for that ball of white
Clear against the bleak, starless sky--
It falls within my outstretched hand.
The moon is mine to keep
Winds, waves, wilderness cease to exist.

Monica Dhawan
IInd Prize

TUNES OF TIME



Pictures on the canvas of time
Were now on the edge of destruction;
Tears rolled down my eyes
Only to disturb the colours those were painted,
In the portals of my mind through the years.

There was my countryside,
Once lush with greens
Red and white lilies blossomed
Heaven on earth the onlookers said
Such was the beauty, lucid.

Backed by the tunes of nature
The rustling golden leaves
The serene voices of the birds
Little ones toddling in the woods
Their smiles gleaming through their parted lips
I, too, played in the meadows
Climbed the tanned hills
Slept on the white sands
I saw the brown leaves fall
And the green ones evolve.

I was only a little one then
Only too small to understand nature
Times have flown,
they have changed,
A change that has captured the peace.
I have tread down the lane
A nostalgic mosaic of memories
Those were the old times
Never will they return to me
I walk not knowing where I reach
The journey I have decided to make,
The memories will hold my hands
Hopes will take me through the times
To a future that I will cherish
On my final journey to heaven.

Dr. Priya
IIIrd Prize

Somedays,
I have to ask my room
to stay with me-
slipping away into another
mood
or some chaos
or too many people,
it squawks and cackles
and forgets
that there used to be some
stillness--
some silent curtains
to hold and swing around with
and brew up a witchblack
blankness
mixing tableau
over tableau arranging life
as the shadows altered
or as the faces changed.



The distance in this dark is hypnotic-
where do these frames end?
Suddenly there seem to be lines over lines over
lines
and then nothing
and then
lines again.
am I repeating myself?
or is it my eyes?

These disappointments must make me strong
instead, they dissolve my heart
I sink into a silence
and low quietude.
My bearings loosen their grip
on the tracks
and where I drive into
is still dark.
Darker than frailty.

Drizzle dawns are a grey quietness.
The world goes hush,
feet tread soft,
kids don't kick stones on their way to school.
I sit here at my desk
beside a large window that
allows wind whispering-
I am happy to be alive
this overcast morning
That's a lie.
Or that's the truth.

Netra Shyam
IIIrd Prize

I am a Stranger



I am a canvass
Waiting to be filled in
I am a rivulet
Desperate to reach my destination
I am a dewdrop
Soothing but not sensuous, noticeable but not noteworthy
I am a stranger
Looking for an identity
I was born a stranger
Don't want to die one

I grew quietly
Holding the finger of my father
I passed through my childhood
Then one day I jumped outside my protected threshold
Barely could open my eyes
The lights were too bright
The sounds too harsh
My heartbeats were dancing
My smile kept growing
I raised my hands
Wanted to touch the sky
But the sky raced farther
I tried yet again
In my childlike exuberance
But the sky was too far
The zenith too high
Two hands lifted me up
Pulled me to the height
The zenith stooped down
The crowds cheered
I struggled and wriggled
Let me do it myself
I do not need help
But the hands did not leave till I reached the sky
I faked a smile
The crowds cheered

The music blared
The lights dazzled
I stepped past the door
Into a new world
I am a new person
Someone's better half

So I beamed aloud
I hummed along
The stranger will get an identity
She will be known as herself
So I tried again
Stretched my arms
Wanted to build a castle
But the sand won't stay
Glided through my fingers
I tried yet again
In my youthful optimism
But the sand was too fine
And the zenith too high
Two arms held mine
Erecting the castle
The zenith stooped down
The crowds cheered
I struggled and wriggled
Let me do it myself
I do not need aid
But the arms won't leave till the castle stands
I faked a smile
The crowds cheered

The ball of fire has just set
The last lonely bird returns home
I am a newer person
Someone's source of life
My creation hovers around
With a family to support
He looks at me in dismay
Hope is deserting me
But I still beam aloud
I still hum along
Will the stranger get an identity?
Will she now be known as herself?
So I try yet again
Push my feeble bones
Want to carve a niche
But the strength belies
The bones give up
The niche is too complex
The zenith too high
A figure emerges
Lives my dream
Carves my niche
The crowds cheer
I have no strength to struggle
I cannot do it myself
I do not fake a smile
The crowds keep cheering

I look around
Time is flying
In the tussle called life
I let others surpass
In the longest of queues
I wait for my turn
Finally I surrender
I may be a good daughter
I may be a good wife
I might be a good mother
But no one else
I cannot reach my sky
My castle is not mine
My niche does not belong to me
I do need help to reach my dreams
My father, my husband and my son are my identity
And they ensure it at every step
For them I bury my desires
For them I shun my hopes
Even as they look the other way
I was born a stranger
And I will die a stranger
And they ensure it at every step
Deep down there is still a little girl who wants to do it herself
But now she is calm
The stranger will remain a stranger
She knows it too well
And even if she doesn't
Does it matter?
The night has set
The coast is clear
My pyre is burning
In front of my dear
I lay in peace
There is no inner turmoil
The smile is not fake
And at last I am content
The night has set
The coast is clear
I am happy at last
But there are no crowds to cheer.

Astha Gupta
(Editor's choice)

One Hour Love Story



Three sixty seconds
Sixty minutes
Or was it one hour
The life span of my love story
No confession of feelings
No profession of love
No promises for future
Just a passionate desire
"Man's need"
I submitted
Of exhaustion
Of despair
Of anger
After all he was known to me
He was convicted under IPC 376
I was tried
He was released
The opposing counsel proved-
the act was under consent
Not coercion
I sighed
It is a man's world
It understands them.

Kiran Ojha
(Editor's choice)

Chained By The World

Dark black robes hide a strange face.
Clanging of chains makes his movements known.
Ashamed he walks all alone.
Darkness his home and his life an agonizing story.
No one to turn to, no one to understand.
Surrounded by hypocrites, imprisoned by their thoughts, he walks all alone.
Shouts, but he can only hear echoes.

The look within your eyes reveals emptiness.
There is strange darkness that envelops you.
Lost in a whirlpool of thoughts, you are drifting into the unknown.
Hold on to me, you'll survive.
You belong to me, accept me.
I'm there for you, will always be there for you.
I am the source of your creation.
Together we'll experience the ecstasy of living, of being yourself.
I am inside you, you just have to look within.

It is wrong to talk
It is wrong to watch
It is wrong to be silent.
It is only right to undo the wrong.
But what is right? What is wrong?
Who is right? Who is wrong?
What is stand by, is it right?
What he stands for, is that right?
Is there such thing such as right or wrong?
There is no such a thing as right or wrong?
For what maybe right today, maybe wrong tomorrow.
Let your belief lead the way.

There is a stranger in my bed.
I think I know him well.
Fatefully our paths crossed.
Raw desires and illusions of love brought us together.
Disillusioned feelings changed into burdened responsibilities.
Everything in life has changed but I still have a stranger in my bed.

Dr. Anjali
(Editor's choice)

A poem by Suneet Chopra



Summer heat awakens
phosphoric fire works in
our ancestral graveyards
ground into the sand on the riverside.
lights
float on hot air, boats on
journeys into lands of
myth and dreaming that we
anchor with the soles of
our feet to a cracked earth
tired of drought and ploughing;
manufacture histories
to put us to sleep, though
the vaulted caverns in our
heads refuse to house them
with lived out experience
that already fills their
marble halls with twinkling.
still the faithful swallow
our rejected elephant-headed gods,
bird-headed ones,
many armed goddesses
and epic heroes to fill up
areas imprisoned
by ignorance masked in
these fantastic events
how much have we brushed
away under the clouds of
an imagined past that
our literary wiles have
manufactured?

why do
we use the weapons of the
weak and insecure?
have we not forced the sun
of imperial Britain
to set on our soil? have
we not shed blood time and
again, sent conquerors
back to where they came from,
drowned those who stayed on
in myths of lost battles and
won wars? who needs clever
ploys for foolish worshippers
driven to a sterile end
our lives reject at
every moment that we
fill with struggles for
things like food, clothes, and
a place to live in that we
automatically tie up
with grandiose thoughts of
national liberation,
social justice and a
new world order that will
end exploitation of
man by man?
but petty
needs and comforts drown us
in timelessness, cycles
of a self-defeating
logic of eternity
with their baggage of rebirth
heap burdens of duty
piety and convention
on us, like the teaching
of the only god who
had taste of death
blue krishna:
do the job and
ignore the consequences;
seek bliss, even if it
means blinding yourself to
truth and knowledge of
unrepeated moments
that constitute ongoing life.
be glad to pay the
price of an amnesia
of all that has happened
in the past so that nothing
guides you towards what is
yet to happen and the
present lies open to
games of chance and grab what
you can while the going
is good.
and to hide this
opportunism gods are
called to intervene in
events for an epic
alternative that's turned
tables on history.
things have come to such a
pass that death no longer
frightens us, we are more
fearful of the things we
do in life.
how long must
we cart this baggage on our
shoulders unquestioningly?

(This poem has already been translated and published in Hindi by Prof. Chandrabali Singh in **Samay Sahara** *on 26 January, 2004. It wal also translated and published in Gurmukhi by Balwant Singh in* **Desh Sevak** *on 15 February, 2004)*

Dr. Shubhanker Banerjee

Indian Women: Struggling in the Global Process

During the last 50 years, many Indian women have reached the top position in society, attaining high professional status. Despite such achievements, a vast majority of Indian women are left out of the process of modernization and as well as globalization, the main cause of it is nothing but the discriminaton that still exists in Indian society. They are yet unempowered in terms of education, assets, decision-making powers, political representation and legal rights.

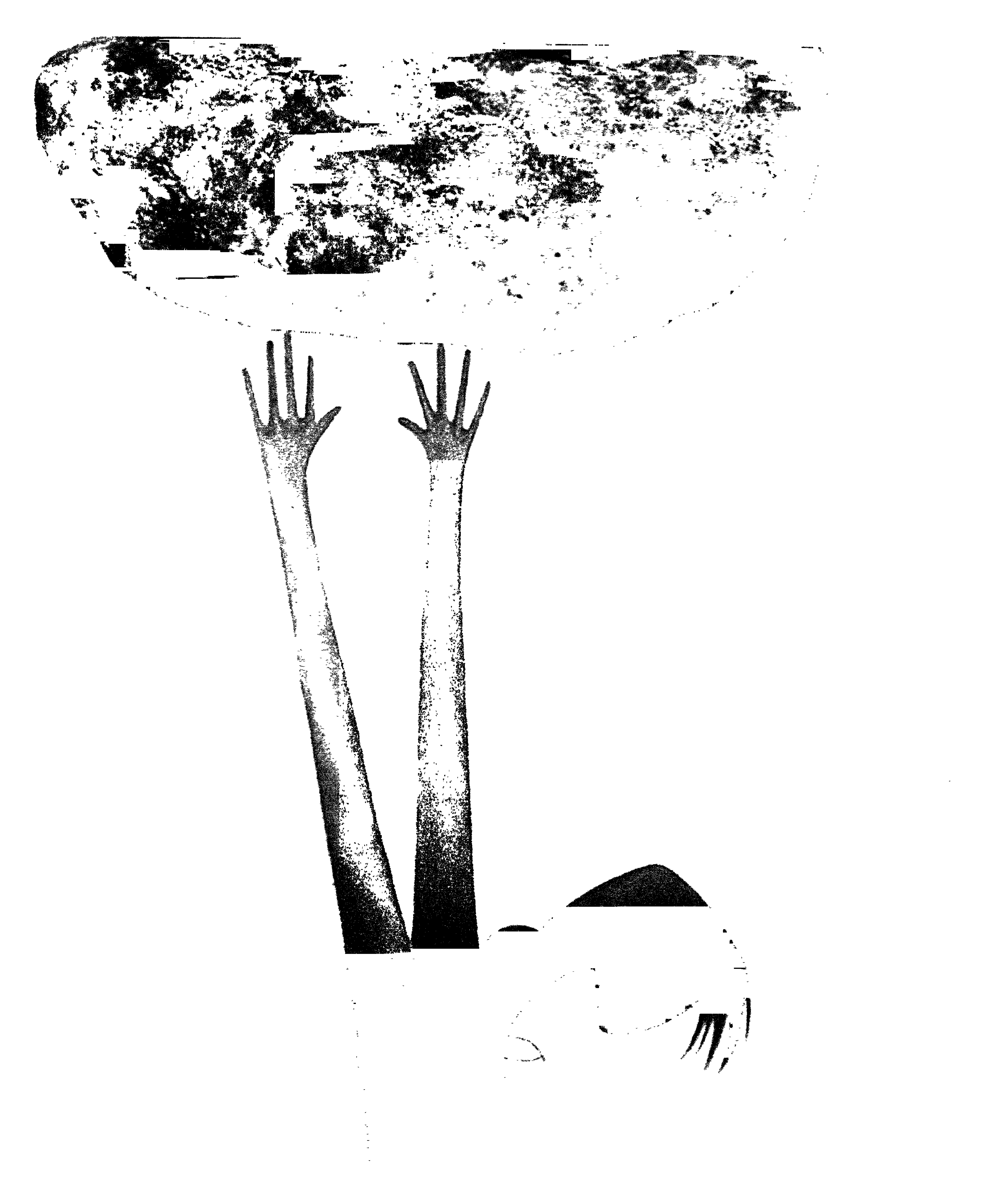
Though the present era of globalization has led to higher salaries and wages in the organized sector, only 17.2% women are employed in this sector. Practically, most working women are in the formal sector, as it offers them expected flexibility in the working hours, even through there are no social security and other medical benefits (such as maternity and post-natal care) offered by employees of these informal units. Similarly, these women are still earning much lower wages than men, despite working hard for the same period.

Women are duly exploited through lower wages and compelled to work in congested working conditions, particularly in the small-scale export sector. Besides, there is huge competition. On the other hand, in the organised private sector, the presence of more foreign companies means intense competition for domestic firms, which has led to constant monitoring of bottom-lines, cost-cutting and restructuring.

In senior positions, women feel the pressure of the new environment of performance-concerned assignments, whereas it is a hard fact that the bottom strata of women workers remains most vulnerable and usually, they are often the first to be retrenched. Nowadays, globalization has also ushered in an era of greater efficiency which has created all-round competition, throughout the world. It has also led to the withdrawal of government from business.

Actually, the government sector has been found particularly suitable for the Indian women, which provides required measures for social security and other benefits. Now, public enterprises are being handed, over to private sector. Due to this reason, many working women are being retrenched or forced to take voluntary retirement under VRS.

The presesnt socio-economic conditions in India have compelled thousands of women who have never ever worked before, to take up any type of job, as their husbands have been retrenched in the public sector, or due



to the exercising of private sector's downsizing policy. Therefore, Indian women are presently forced to earn money, in addition to slogging it out on the domestic front.

Due to many types of financial constraints, even several state governments are facing bankruptcy, and hence are spending less amounts on social services and education, general public health, pure water supply, sanitation and housing, etc. Due to a lack of basic civil amenities, the work-load for women in Indian society has increased tremendously (for instance-fetching water from long distances).

During the past few plans, budgetary allocations for women and child development have shown a relatively downward trend, but in the 2002-2003 budget, the allocation was increased by 33 percent. Even then there still remains a confusing multiplicity of schemes under which money is either misspent or not spent at all. With the dawn of the new era of Indian economic liberalization, the status of women in the Indian society has also risen.

But, on the whole, Indian society still expects women to perform the traditional role of a mother and wife first. Her professional career comes second. They are regularly made aware of their social limitations and hence, obstructs them from choosing an independent life. Therefore, it is especially hard for working, married women to adjust between a job and home.

On the other hand, unlike in the West, if Indian women decide to remain single, then they are looked down upon with suspicion. Besides, the ease of entry in different professions is also matched by job insecurity and the fear of discrimination at the workplace. Therefore, Indian women have to work harder to prove themselves in a man's world.

Historically, even upto 19th and much of the 20th century Indian women remained domestic, duly busy in a homely atmosphere. Just a few (and mostly from the upper strata of the society) women broke free from their cloistered world to become artistes, social workers, teachers and even doctors.

In fact, they had enjoyed the advantage of working within a steady and known social framework which also had a good supportive system specially applicable only for them. But now the challenges are different.

In, the present, Indian women's problems are also more psycho-sociological. The continuation of patriarchal society is still legitimized by older family members. But women in modern India prefer to copy the western model of being independent, as well as self-reliant.

Though, the legal status of Indian women has improved over the last 50 years, they are still afraid of such legal battles. For instance, despite several legislations, women are continuing to face sexual harassment at the workplace. The dowry system and its resultant death causes, which are products of this evil practice, still cannot be totally checked. Similarly, cases of rape, sexual harassment and severe domestic violence have increased in number.

Though property right is also granted to women, still only a few proceed for legal remedies to claim their property right as they are afraid of general social disapproval. Similarly, they are hesitant to seek divorce for fear of losing social and economic status. Due to the effect of massive globalization, villagers are also lured to go to towns for jobs, abandoning their wives. Besides, there are many households headed by women living below the poverty line.

In rural areas, women still continue to be overworked, as well as undernourished. They not only do not have any control over the number of children they bear, but also further compelled to bear sons. Actually, the basic social attitudes towards women have not yet changed.

Even affluence and higher incomes have not enabled them to change such peculiar Indian attitudes. Still many

of them have become enslaved to growing consumerism and are also blasé about the problems of other women less privileged than them.

It is only due to the lack of concerted action that women in India have not yet received 33% reservation in parliament. At present, only about 8% members of Parliament (MPs) are women. Similarly, the representation is also not proportional in the Indian Civil Services, according to their numbers.

Excepting a few high profile success stories and special achievements of Indian women, still a majority of them are continuing their hard struggle to overcome oppression as well as marginalization in other worlds—about 58% of adult women who are still illiterate, are now bound to be excluded from the process of modernization and globalization. The world 'women empowerment' is not an easily achievable target. Organizing seminar and conference during Women's Day, Women's Week, and so on, seem to have lost the power to specially attack the increasingly savage feudal realities in Indian society. Sometimes, the term 'gender' simply turns as a career option which becomes a well-paid and morally legitimate avenue for ambitious professionals.

It is a hard truth that there are several cosmopolitan women for whom the term 'feminism' is merely a sexy slogan as even for others, 'victim' is a label of some glamorous achievement. There are some so-called women activists for whom gender resides only in earnest inaugurations and pious resolutions. In more clarified words, they secretly loathe other women and just work towards their downfall.

However, there are several loading experts of the problems but still gender is like the Indian economic system and now things are getting worse. It is still a raw practical point that if a woman is not attached to or with the shelter of a man, then her daily life in society can be a nightmare. Still we badly need to make 'gender' as robust and as down to earth as possible. The achievement of a few professional women making a mark in the predominantly male-dominated scene cannot be ignored.

The few Indian women who attained global achievement in society have been marked by an absence of fuss. In fact, they do not have time for a glamorous 'hatred' of men. They have just used a commonsensical rootedness in the same society, as well as a quiet maximization of their natural gifted talents.

Indian women have to fight many battles that still lie ahead, as Indian society remains fully dominated by casteism and a male-administered social system. Top and powerful professional posts are held by males. Judges, civil service officers, media personalities, business magnates and executives are mainly males.

Still seminars and conferences on different welfare issues are organized in a feudal manner in which womens' participation is minimal. Though we make several decisions on how to widen the ambit of Indian democracy, still less than 10% tickets are distributed to women during elections. The Hindu caste system is as much a system of ideas, as it is a social arrangement. Therefore, hierarchy remains central to the common Hindu mentality. For instance, elder-younger, rich-poor, VIP-commoner, pure-polluted, upper-lower, male-female. Above all when the main question that arises repeatedly is 'What is the gender of this person?' It implies 'What is her status, birth, family, relations, her right to speak or exist?' Merit and talent are merely flimsy virtues of a woman contestant. Therefore after many decades of general elections, while casting our votes, our minds remains brutally anti-democratic.

On the whole, seminars on 'empowerment' are like seminars on secularism. To prevent gender from remaining trapped in officially sponsored Women's Day programmes, it is imperative that women are convinced to fight against any type of exploitation. Only then Indian women will be able to stand strongly on their own in the modern era of globalization.

INDIAN JEWELLERY

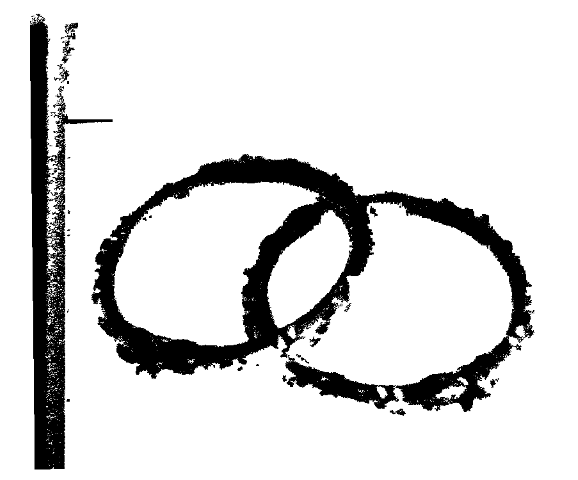
TAKING A LEAF OUT OF NATURE

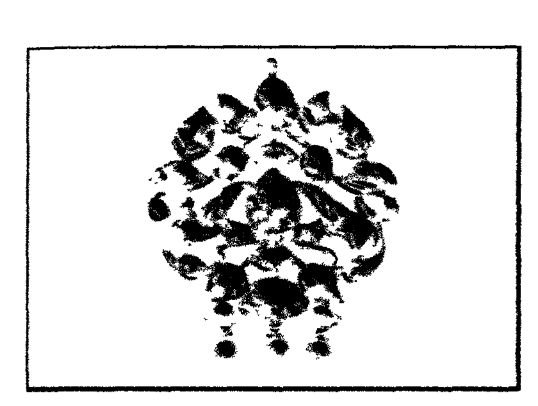
Alka Raghuvanshi

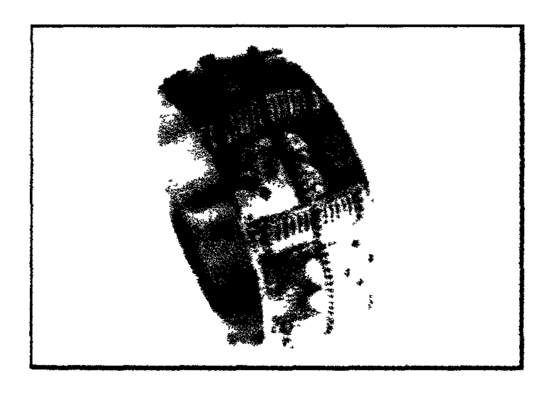
The sensual tinkle of a *payal*, the suggestive clink of bangles, the erotic sway of a silver *kardhani* on a slim waist or the regal grandeur of a *navratna* necklace adorning a *surahidaar* neck are stuff legends and poems are made of. So much so that they have become such an inseparable part of popular psyche that on sighting these, the romantic in each one of us can't help but respond with a quickening of the heartbeat.

For travelling through India — rural or urban areas, one is struck by the sight of women working in the fields or beggar women even on street crossings bedecked with jewellery as if they were off to a celebration. Perhaps this profusion of jewellery is even an anomaly of sorts. For poverty or underdevelopment do not necessarily translate into lack of ornaments in the family. As not only is the family's saving locked up in jewellery, a man's status is often defined by the amount of jewellery the women of his family sport. These social and economic factors have in turn ensured that some of the designs from the pre-industrial era right up to the contemporary times have survived. Another very important factor is that India has remained predominantly a rural society and such societies are largely conservative as far as change in design is concerned. For the simple reason that these designs have been perfected over the centuries and consequently stood the test of time. For instance the *hansuli* or the *hasli* as it is popularly known, has changed very little from the early centuries of



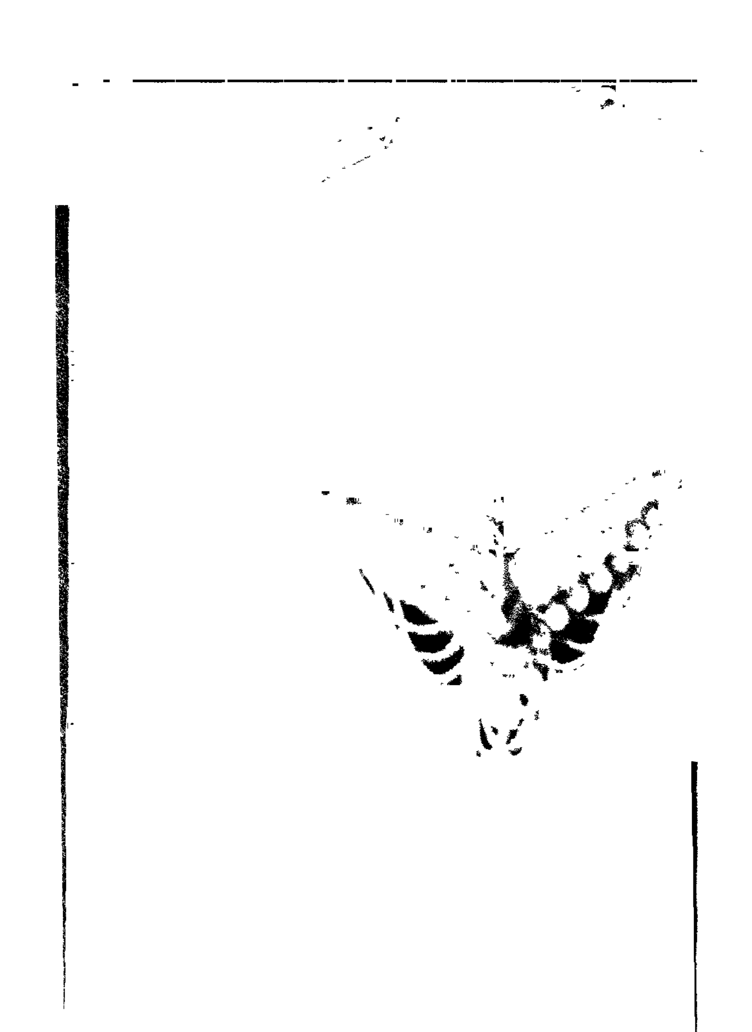






the christian era and nor have bracelets.

It is this rural background that provides Indian jewellery with its essential dynamism for being agriculture or forest inspired creation. the ornamentation is also inspired by nature. Look closely and it will be amply clear as to where these designs are coming from — at once a part of you as a larger part of the cosmos. Flowers, seeds, fruits, fish, all translated and immortalised into metal – so much so that a popular design of earring is even called a *karnphul* as it sits in the ear lobe dainty as a flower. The swaying *jhumka* or *jhimaki* as it is called in the southern part of India, is rather akin to an upturned flower.



Rivers, snakes, the sun, the moon, are all part of the lifecycles of most of the rural folk. So much so that they form part of the ritual that is interwoven into their lives. It is then when these natural objects transcend their mere decorative value. They become ritual objects with magical qualities. Natural objects themselv-es, metals are associated with mighty rivers. For instance, silver is not only seen as an embodiment of the moon but also the river Yamuna, who in turn is supposed to be the sister of Lord Yama. Likewise, the purest of metals, gold, is supposed to be akin to the river Ganga. Likewise copper for cost, aesthetic and medicinal factors is the metal used among certain tribals.

Stones too are linked to nature in an even more direct manner and are said to be imbued with properties of the planets. These planets in turn are connected to the days of the week which are further dedicated to various Gods like Monday to Shiva with pearl (*moti*) as its stone, Tuesday to Hanuman with coral (*munga*) as the stone, Wednesday to Budh with emerald (*panna*) as the stone, Thursday dedicated to *Brihaspati* with yellow sapphire (*pukhraj*), Friday is for *Shukra* with diamond (*hira*), Saturday dedicated to Shani with blue sapphire (*neelam*) and Sunday being *Surya*'s day with red ruby (*manik*). So powerful are said to be these planets that the *navratna haar* with nine gemstones was devised to ward off negative influences of all of them.

The ancient Indians have thought of ornaments literally from head to toe. From the *mang tika, singar patti, borla, chhapka*, on the forehead to the *chaand suraj* on the crown of the head to the ornamented *chhoti* for the braid, to clips for the hair to the various ornaments for the *jooda*, we've really got it covered! Given the fact that most rural women are outdoors a lot, these ornaments are said to help absorb the heat of the sun and prevent the sunrays from directly affecting the body. Travelling further

down, comes the nose ring also a symbol to depict the marital status of a woman with its mindboggling variations, the most spectacular one being the *nath* from Himachal which can sometimes weigh as much as half a kilogram to uphold the family honour! Despite the complicated system of chains and hooks to distribute the weight, the nose must surely bear the brunt of it!

By its sheer variety, the earrings must surely compete for the maximum attention: From the *bugadi* designed like bunch of grapes worn by the Gowda and the Koli community at the tip of the ear to the variations descending to the lobe with the rather spectacular hanging flower-like ear ornament, *dujeru*, worn by the Kashmiri Brahmin women, the array, quite simply, is spectacular. Certain parts of the ear are said to be pressure points and it is believed that piercing them in certain places prevents diseases like asthma. In rather poverty-stricken areas piercing is so done that the hunger points are taken care of and the women need less food! Literally killing two birds with a stone! In Kerala, the lush green leaves provide the inspiration for the delicate shimmering leaves for the earrings. The Mughal king Akbar's wife Jodhabai's kitchen in the palace of Fatehpur Sikri near Agra echoes some of most brilliant earring designs on the red sandstone.

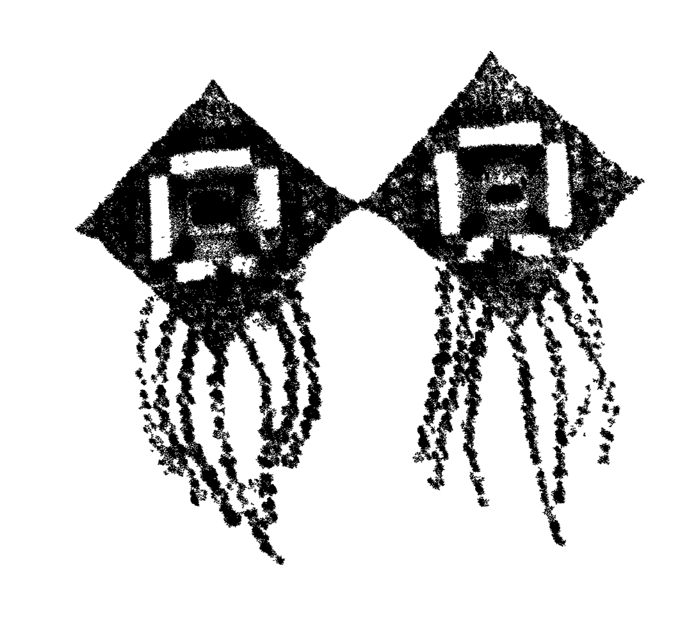
The neck too is an important area for embellishment. From the various chains, *haslis*, *haars*, flat, tubular, twisted, engraved, or set with stones, the designs again borrow from nature. Be it the *mangaimala* (mango necklace) from Tamil Nadu to the ceremonial design of two facing parrot or peacocks popular in Andhra or the moonshaped pendants from Coorg in Karnataka and Assam to the red and green stone encrusted flower or snake design from Kerala, or the Goddess Lakshmi embossed coin necklaces of Saurashtra and Malwa in Madhya Pradesh, the choice is endless. Then of course are the ritual necklaces that denote the marital status of a



woman like the mangalsutra with breast-like formations in Maharashtra to the *thali* in the southern states. The utilitarian pendants worn by Himachal women around their neck — one is a long toothpick and the other an elongated ear cleaner with a tiny scoop for ear wax on the other end are specific in their usage. From the decorative to the ritualised to the utilitarian, it is hardly surprising that Indian women have this immense fascination for jewellery.

Armlets, bracelets, rings in their various forms went beyond the decorative. They were supposed to provide protection from the evil eye, enhance astrological and planetary effects and if they also managed to trigger off poets' imagination, well, it was only incidental! Here too the designs vary from the highly stylised birds, flowers, buds, bees, honeycombs, fishes, fishnets, to the severely geometric that they could easily have come from a design studio. *Kardhanis* for the waist too are likened to creepers around a tree, either encircling the waist completely or like half moon embellishing a section of the waist.

Now to some of the singularly spectacular ornaments that have been the subject of some rather inspired poetry and film romance: Ornaments for the feet. From fruits to leaves to flowers to fish, all of them have found expression in patterns that have fired the imagination of Indian women through the centuries in the *payals* and toe rings. From the starkly chunky in Kutch to the delicate filigree from Orissa silver is the most favoured metal – for economic and pliable reasons. The rich have naturally favoured gold and precious stones in a bid to establish their supremacy. Yet the designs have merely been variations on that theme simply for the fountainhead of inspiration remains the same. Just as the handing down of designs through generations of gold and silver-smiths and the constancy in the tastes of their patrons have ensured their survival.



However, folk and tribal communities the primitive levels of development vis a vis urbanisation have contributed to the preservation of the purity of their jewellery. As has the fact that they use a number of locally available material to make their jewellery ranging from the pretty to the bizarre. Coral, cowrie, shells, turquoise, deer teeth, fish bones, terra cotta, all gets translated into body orna-ments. Jewellery in tribes — people is also a symbol that distinguishes them apart. For instance, in the Naga hills, hornbill feathers in an animal headband identifies warriors, only Ao clans are permitted to wear bracelets made of ivory, while Konyak warriors adorn monkey skulls instead of human heads.



Contemporary fashion is as fickle as the people it caters to. But tradition in India has so far withstood the test of time, and has helped preserve forms, styles and techniques perfected over the centuries in an unbroken sequence of ornament making and body adornment. While the high end users of the economic spectrum acquire jewellery mostly to put away into bank vaults, and to be passed on from one generation to the next. It is they who blindly ape the minimalistic fashions of the Western designers. The middle classes often have no option but to go in for kitsch as far as designs are concerned, if they wish to keep the purity of the metal. It is indeed the poor to whom goes the credit of keeping the decorative continuity going – be it for magico-religious reasons or for sheer economic ones. For it is an old village saying that a goldsmith will, as a matter of sheer habit, steal gold from his mother's nose ring!

Ahimsa Silk



A*himsa Paramo Dharmah*—is the spirit of Indian philosophy. Vedas teach and preach great Messiahs to impose the path of *Ahimsa* in the daily life of human beings to achieve *Moksha*. This background speaks volumes about the great history, culture and traditions of India. Fathers of the Indian Constitution incorporated the *Ahimsa Dharmo* in the directive principles of state policy. Fundamental duties of citizens, as incorporated in the Indian Constitution, reads:

" *It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural Environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures.* "

If we examine our day-to-day life, particularly in relation to the fabric we use in almost all holy, spiritual and auspicious occasions, it will be a great surprise to us to know that the fabric we use for these pious purposes is the end product of the assassination of thousands of innocent creatures such as silkworms. The Almighty does not definitely expect any prayer or worship or offering, from any devotee who is robed with fabric produced from *Himsa* i.e., violence, be it knowingly or unknowingly.

Few people know that silk worms wrap themselves up in cocoons made of layers of thread to protect themselves from predators while they mature into butterflies and moths. It is this butterfly baby that is boiled or steamed alive in its cocoon and its thread used for silk. It takes the life of 15 silk moths to produce 1gram of woven silk. To produce 100 grams of pure silk approximately 1500 chrysalis have to die. One sari uses up to 50,000 dead creatures.

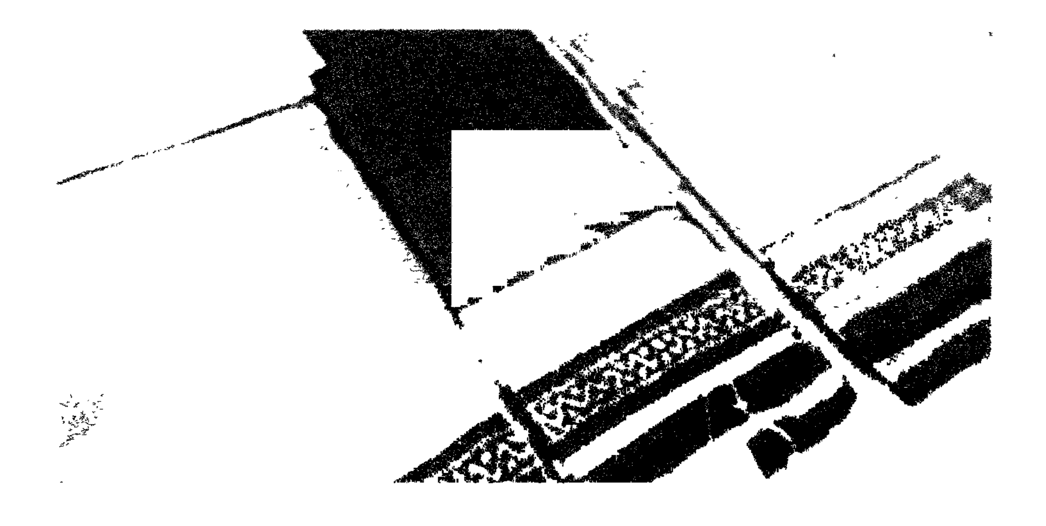
India has 700 silk producing centres spread over 17 states. The total production in 1994- 95 was 13, 879 tonnes. Calculate that in terms of butterflies' lives.

Those who revel in the rustle, colour, shimmer and splendor of silk should know how it is produced .Here is the life cycle of the little creature sacrificed for each strand. The process of creating *Ahimsa* silk is certainly more laborious and requires many more cocoons than regular silk. As a result *Ahimsa* silk is slightly more expensive than other silk. However, in no other way does it took or feel different. And for those who understand the value of life, money is but a small price to pay.

Realising this, Kusuma Rajaiah, a diploma holder in Handloom Technology from the Indian Institute of Handloom Technology, who is working in APCO, since 23 years as senior technical assistant has taken upon himself the mission to provide *Ahimsa Silk* (silk obtained without killing the silkworms) in the year 2000 and it has taken about a year to design a holy and a pious fabric for all auspicious occasions that will be produced with the yarn taken from pierced cocoons (the live moth comes out from the cocoons), i.e. without subjecting silkworms and moths to death, unlike the regular process of reeling the yarn by throwing the live silkworms in the shape of cocoons in the boiling water for their unnatural death for commercial benefits. As great lovers of our age-old inherited customs and cultures, we should realize our responsibility in the sprit of the philosophy of *Ahimsa*. His work has been applauded and recognized by spiritual heads and holy personalities.

Let us together promote the *Ahimsa* fabric (*Saree, Angavastram*, etc.) to keep the Holy Spirit intact in all our holy practices.

We would like to acknowledge the support and input of Mrs. Maneka Gandhi, Chairperson, People for Animals.



"PASS THE FLAME, UNITE THE WORLD"

OLYMPIC TORCH

Neeru Dhall

une 10, 2004 was a normal weekday, but Delhi looked different because after a gap of forty years, the Olympic Torch came to India!

The Olympic Torch Relay – or the transfer of the sacred Olympic flame from ancient Olympia, Greece, to the host city- commenced this year with the lighting ceremony in Olympia, from where it is travelling to 5 continents, 27 countries 33 cities and 78000 km in 78 days, in the hands of 3500 torchbearers. August 13, 2004 will mark the beginning of the Athens 2004 Olympics.

The Olympic Torch was first lighted in Olimpia in 776 BC. Kindled by the sun's rays, it was considered the sacred flame symbolizing the creation of the world, renewal and light. It was also the sacred symbol of Hephaestus, and a gift to the human race from Prometheus, who stole it from Zeus.

During the ancient Olympic games, the flame was never, extinguished and its purity was preserved throughout. A traditional *lampadedromia* (Greek for torch relay) was organized, from the altar of Prometheus to the altar of Goddess Athena on the Acropolis. Olympics were banned in 393 BC and restarted in 1896.

The Olympic Torch is designed to resemble an olive leaf. The value of Olympics- Unity, Participation, Celebration and Human Scale are expressed through its unique design.

On June 10, two special aircraft carrying the sacred flame, flew into the Capital, and was received by Mr. Suresh Kalmadi, President IOA (Indian Olympic Association). It was



taken to the Marriott Hotel. The relay began from Qutab Minar to the National Stadium, passing through many significant landmarks of Delhi.

The Chief Minister of Delhi Smt. Shiela Dikshit and Greek Ambassador to India Mr. Efstathios Lazos, and Mr. Suresh Kalmadi, President IOA were present at the flag off ceremony at Qutab. This was followed by a traditional performance of *Taalvadyam* in the presence of hundreds of school children and spectators.

Sports personalities like Ajit Pal Singh (Hockey), Anjali Bhagwat(Shooting), Virendra Sehwag and Anil Kumble (Cricket), Mahesh Bhupati (Tennis), Malleshwari and Milkha Singh (Athletics), and cinestars like Aishwarya Rai, Amir Khan, Bipasha Basu, Rani Mukherjee and Vivek Oberoi participated in the relay along with eminent corporate leaders and even physically challenged persons. It seemed as if the whole of Delhi was out on the roads cheering and singing in the sprit of Olympics.

At the end of the Torch relay at National Stadium, a cultural program was presented by Shankar, Ehsan and Loy, and Shiamak Davar, Louis Banks, Sivamani and Bansi Kaul. Kavita Krishnamurthy sang a special song dedicated to the Olympic spirit:"Pass the Flame, Unite the World", penned by Gulzar. The show culminated with a laser show and beautiful fireworks.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AWARD FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING



As a tribute to the memory of the late Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and to his lifelong dedication to the cause of world peace and international understanding, the Government of India instituted the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding for outstanding contibution to the promotion of international understanding, goodwill and friendship among peoples of the world.

Since its inception in 1965, the Nehru Award has been conferred on the following distinguished personalities:

U Thant
Martin Luther King Jr.
Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan
Yehudi Menuhin
Mother Teresa
Kenneth D Kaunda
Josip Broz Tito
Andre Malraux
Julius K Nyerere
Raul Prebish
Jonas Salk
Giuseppe Tucci
Tulsi Mcherji Shrestha
Nichidatsu Fujii
Nelson Mandela
Barbara Ward
Alva and Gunnar Myrdal
Leopold Sedar Senghor
Bruno Kreisky
Indira Gandhi
Olaf Palme
Javier Perez de Cuellar
Yasser Arafat
Robert Gabriel Mugabe
Helmut Kohl
Aruna Asaf Ali
Maurice F Strong
Aung San Suu Kyi
Mahathir Bin Mohamad
Hosney Mubarak
Goh Chok Tong



H E MR. GOH CHOK TONG
Prime Minister Republic of Singapore

Born:	Singapore, 20 May 1941
Education.	
1955-1960	Raffles Institution, Singapore
1961-1964	University of Singapore (Bachelor of Arts with Honours (First Class) in Economics)
1966-1967	Williams College, USA (Master of Arts in Development Economics)
Appointments:	
1964-1969	Administrative Officer, Singapore Administrative Service
1969-Sep. 1977	Neptune Orient Lines: Planning and Projects Manager Financial Director Managing Director (Nov. 1973-Sep. 1977)
1976 to date	Member of Parliament (Marine Parade GRC)
1977	Senior Minister of State for Finance
1979-Nov. 1990	Held Various portfolios as Minister for Trade and Industry Minister for Health and Minister for Defence
1985	First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence
1990 (Nov.) to date	Prime Minister
Political Activities:	Member of People's Action Party Central Executive Committee since 1979 Second Assistant Secretary-General (1984-1989) Assistant Secretary-General (1984-1989) First Assistant Secretary-General (1989-1992) Secretary General (1992 to date)
Family :	Married Tan Choo Leng Bachelor of Laws (Hons), University of Singapore Advocate and Solicitor 1 Daughter, 1Son (twins)
Recreation:	Golf, Tennis

As Prime Minister of Singapore from 1990, Mr. Goh Chok Tong has steered the destiny of his nation with a strong compassionate and steady hand. During this decade and a half, he has moulded Singapore into a vibrant multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious society, creating in his diverse country what he has described as 'a Singapore tribe'. He has helped to truly make Singapore "a nation of distinction", thereby fulfilling a pledge he had taken at the time of assuming office.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong has been a believer in a forward looking partnership between India and Singapore. He had responded to India's economic liberalization programme in 1991 with a promise to generate an "India fever" in Singapore. Under his personal guidance, India-Singapore relations have deepended, diversified and consolidated, and a firm foundation has been laid for further growth in the future. The process he started has resulted in an enduring relationship-of trust, support and mutual respect.

Always a step ahead of the times, Mr. Goh has led with ideas to build linkages across regions and continents. He has been a tireless advocate of enhancing international understanding through political dialogue, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and people to people contacts. He is the architect of the Asia-Europe Meeting, Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation and more recently Asia-Middle East Dialogue.

By conferring the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding of the new millenium on Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, India honours this outstanding leader of Singapore who has contributed so much to making his country, the South East Asia region and the world a more stable, integrated and harmonious place.

In a Wheelchair

For Dr. K. Anji Reddy

A Short Story by
Shiv K. Kumar (Padma Bhushan)

On the walls of his living room in the three-storey bungalow, hung several photographs, showing a handsome young man in his early thirties - doing a pole-vault, like a dolphin somersaulting out of the sea, riding a stallion, or diving from a spring-board into a swimming pool. But a paralytic stroke, a few years ago, had immobilized Jayant's left leg and arm, putting him into a wheelchair. Lonesome and helpless, he was now gradually awakening to a new realization that the ground under one's feet is more real than flying up in a plane, that the moon and stars are perhaps just creations of one's mind, that his immediate concern is to cautiously negotiate a sharp bend on the street, avoid a pit-fall, or wheel securely over a speed breaker. No longer was it now possible for him to enter a house with three or four steps to its front verandah. But, above all, it was the indignity of being looked at by people around as a helpless cripple.

However, he soon learnt to reassert his dignity by saying: I am not my handicap. He also no longer felt lonesome as his old college mates - Mohammed Saleem, Narinder Gupta and Srinivas Reddy - visited him over the weekends for drinks. While Gupta and Reddy often waxed eloquent over discussions on contemporary politics, Saleem remained deep in the bottle.

On weekdays, Jayant kept himself occupied with reading, a habit he'd learnt from his parents, who were now gone. Six months after his father died of cardiac arrest, his mother followed with brain haemorrhage. He always thought of them as a pair of love-birds - cranes, or swans. In remembrance of his parents, he decided to preserve their bed, a double bed, a fancy room on the third floor, in its original form, stereo system and small bookshelves all around.

Jayant felt surprised when one Saturday, Saleem brought his sister along with him.

'Fatima also loves flowers,' he said, introducing her to Jayant.

'Most welcome,' he responded.

Jayant noticed that she was a very attractive woman - wheat complexion, hair done into a bun at the back of her head, and eyes sensitive and curious like a rabbit's. Then, leaving his friends to the bottle, he took Fatima around his garden. As he wheeled around his flower-beds, he pointed towards his roses, lilies, pansies and chrysanthemums, his eyes glowing with excitement. To him, he said, a chrysanthemum's crest is like a turkey's tiara, its coronet. And don't a pansy's eyes stare with a child's wonder? 'And, there,' he added, pointing to a slender-stemmed lotus in a small pond, 'is a ballerina delicately poised on her left foot.'

'Marvellous!' Fatima exclaimed, completely overwhelmed by his visual imagination. Why had destiny treated him so unkindly, she asked herself. In his eyes, she saw the loneliness of a sick tusker forsaken by its herd.

'It's only now,' Jayant came on again thumping the left arm of his wheelchair, 'that I've learnt that while the earth is a concrete reality, the sky is only an illusion. There are no roses and lilies up there, no fruit trees either. These things lie in the earth's womb, waiting to be quickened into life when a seed is planted.' Then he suddenly broke off. 'I seem to have bored you with my blabber.'

'On the contrary,' she said, 'I am lapping up, each word, drinking it in like nectar. If only you'd go on.

It was now time to bring her back to his friends who'd run through their Johnny Walker and were waiting for Jayant to get them another bottle. Fatima sat with them for a while, listening to Reddy's comments on India's failing fiscal policy, while Saleem was gulping down one glass after another. Feeling visibly bored, she then asked her brother to take her back home.

As they were on the road, he turned to her. 'Isn't he a little touched in the brain'?

'You shouldn't talk so harshly about your friend and host.'

But Saleem just hiccupped and went mute. When Fatima saw his hands wobbling over the steering wheel, she felt scared. She asked him to move aside and let her drive.

Four days later, she came alone to Jayant, carrying a packet and a bouquet of roses.

'Here are some seedlings of orchids, the only flower missing in your garden... And some roses for you.'

'Now, this blubberer does not have the words to thank you.'

She just smiled.

'The way you've introduced your flowers to me the other day, you must be a poet,' she said.

'Well, I do scribble some verses now and then.'

'Then how about a private poetry reading near your lotus pond' she suggested.

At once he wheeled back to his living room and returned with a note-book in his right hand. He then offered to read a poem he'd written after her last visit. "The poem", Jayant said," is titled '*The Garden*,' although it should have been more aptly called 'Our Garden.' He then began to read it:

> *Far away from the city,*
> *riddled with pitfalls,*
> *we reside in a garden*
> *a replica of that other place*
> *where once lived a man*
> *with a woman created out of his ribs.*
> *Here we both live in peace*
> *while I write verses, poised on the stem*
> *of a lotus, she talks to the wind*
> *in a language that only flowers can understand.*

'Beautiful!' she exclaimed. 'Like yourself.'

Jayant crimsoned at her generous compliment.

Thereafter, she began to visit him almost every other day. He liked her visits unannounced because this held him in suspense all the time. His eyes always kept looking eagerly at the front gate. But he noticed that after about a month, Saleem had dropped out of the weekend get-together. Now Jayant had only Gupta and Reddy for company.

One evening, as he and Fatima were sitting near the lotus pond, Saleem charged in. He turned to his sister:

'I've been shadowing you for quite some days.' Then glowering at Jayant, he added, 'You are a seducer... I ask you to keep your hands off her.'

Jayant just stared blankly at him, but didn't say anything. But he saw that Fatima was boiling over with rage.

After Saleem zoomed off in his car, Jayant said to Fatima:

'I knew from the very beginning that our affair was doomed

to disaster. We seem to be going down a dark tunnel with no light at the other end. Oh, the difference in worlds! How could your family let you…' He trailed off.

'I know it all,' she responded. 'But my life is my own.'

A long spell of silence fell between the two. Jayant was looking into the lotus pond, its water reflecting a lotus swaying sideways in the morning breeze. Then his voice rose as if from a deep well, like a muffled echo.

'You know that no life has ever sprung from a wheelchair. It's a sterile, steel thing.'

'Love is not just sleeping in bed and procreating,' she murmured.

'You sound like Gandhari.'

'Who is she?'

'A character in the *Mahabharata* - someone who blindfolded herself voluntarily, out of empathy for her blind husband.'

'That's the only way to defy destiny.' What kind of woman was Fatima, Jayant wondered. A unique creation of God.

Just then a car stopped near the front gate and they both saw Saleem walking threateningly towards them, his eyes burning like embers.

'You are playing with fire, Fatima ... This cripple is a seducer.'

'And you've been enjoying his generous hospitality,' she retorted. 'Ingratitude is worse than a serpent's tooth - I don't know who said that.'

Saleem turned back, humiliated. But before leaving, he drew close to Jayant and shook his wheelchair so violently that he almost reeled off.

Defiantly, Fatima and Jayant decided to get married, privately. But when Fatima asked if he'd like her to change her name, he countered, 'Why shouldn't I do it? I'll call myself Ghulam Ali or whatever.'

When Fatima went home to announce her marriage, her parents called her a blemish on the family. But it was Saleem who drove her out of the house, saying 'This is no place for an infidel ... Go back to that cripple - that's where you now belong.'

'Indeed,' she hurled her monosyllabic retort at them and walked away.

When Jayant heard it all, he felt shattered, and moisture welled up in his eyes. If only he'd been, once again, a young man riding a stallion... He then gently raised his right hand and brought her mouth close to his lips. 'I love you,' he said, as he kissed her impetuously. Then, pointing towards his bungalow, he said, 'It's all yours now.' He asked her if she'd like to make his parents' bedroom on the third floor their room now. Immediately, she nodded her approval. But before taking her upstairs he showed her the photographs in the living room. She was fascinated as she gazed at each one of them.

Then he wheeled himself out to the elevator, which his father had installed for his convenience. Jayant also showed her the stairs that ran parallel to the elevator. As it clanked open on the third floor, he led her into his parents' room. She liked it, but suggested that they should have all the photographs in the living room brought up there.

It had been warm and humid since morning. But by evening, the weather took a turn. Dark clouds appeared in the sky, and a cool wind rose from the horizon. Then, suddenly, it started to drizzle — little drops falling in the lotus pond, on the roses, the lilies and the chrysanthemums in the garden below.

As Jayant and Fatima were about to turn from the balcony into their bedroom, they saw Saleem walking in through the front gate. A few minutes later, he landed on the third floor and strode into their bedroom. He glowered menacingly at both Saleem and Fatima.

A little scared, she asked him : 'What do you want?'

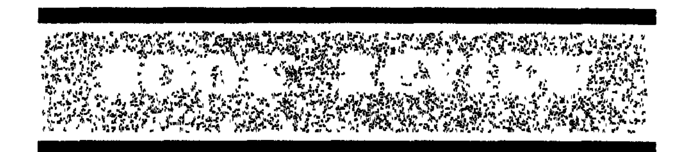
'I want him ...' he hissed.

Before she could fathom what he meant, she saw him pushing Jayant's wheel chair out of the room. The next moment, she heard the chair crashing down the stairs.

Dazed, she took the elevator down to the ground, and there lay Jayant in a pool of blood, dead.

'Oh God!' she yelled, as if the sky had fallen on the earth, and the entire universe had perished. As she turned, she saw Saleem standing behind her, with a satanic grin on his face. Fixing him with an angry stare, she said:

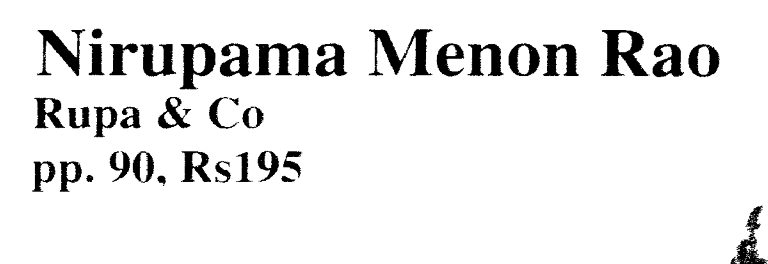
'My curse will shadow you everywhere till you end up in the gallows.'



Amit Bhatia

Nirupama Menon Rao

Rupa & Co
pp. 90, Rs195





Nirupama Menon Rao was born in Kerala and raised in army cantonments away from the native state. She has been a career diplomat since the age of twenty two and has served in Austria, Sri Lanka, the United States, Peru and Russia. She is the first woman to serve as spokesperson of the Indian Foreign Office. She has been a Fellow of the Harvard University, and her interests include Sinology, the study of frontiers, poetry and classical music.

Nirupama Menon Rao starts her book with a Shakespearean dilemma: remember *The Merchant of Venice*, where Antonio starts the play:
In soothe I do not know why I am so sad...

Her first lines in the foreword are
Why I write poetry I do not know...

As a publisher and an editor who is exposed to more poetry writers than readers, it is an interesting insight...All I can say is, Nirupama, if you knew why you write poetry we would have been deprived of a brilliant piece of literature, contemporary, evocative..and haiku like. For many times, in knowing the whys, we lose the beauty that lies in exploring the unknown within. *Rain Rising's* brilliance lies in its simplicity and its capacity in carrying gems of zen truths that are interspersed in her sparkling verse.
Here are a few samples of her sheer brilliance...

> *"achievement is the numbness of nerve endings"*

> *"You are*
> *the woman*
> *singing under water*
> *imagining the fishes*
> *as she watches*
> *her murderous lover*
> *sing a little water song to her drowning*
> *knowing she will live in spaces*
> *unseen to all*
> *but her,..."*

> *"The afternoon*
> *blinks*
> *on cycle bells*
> *that toll*
> *endlessly."*

My personal favourite is this brilliant line from Meeting:

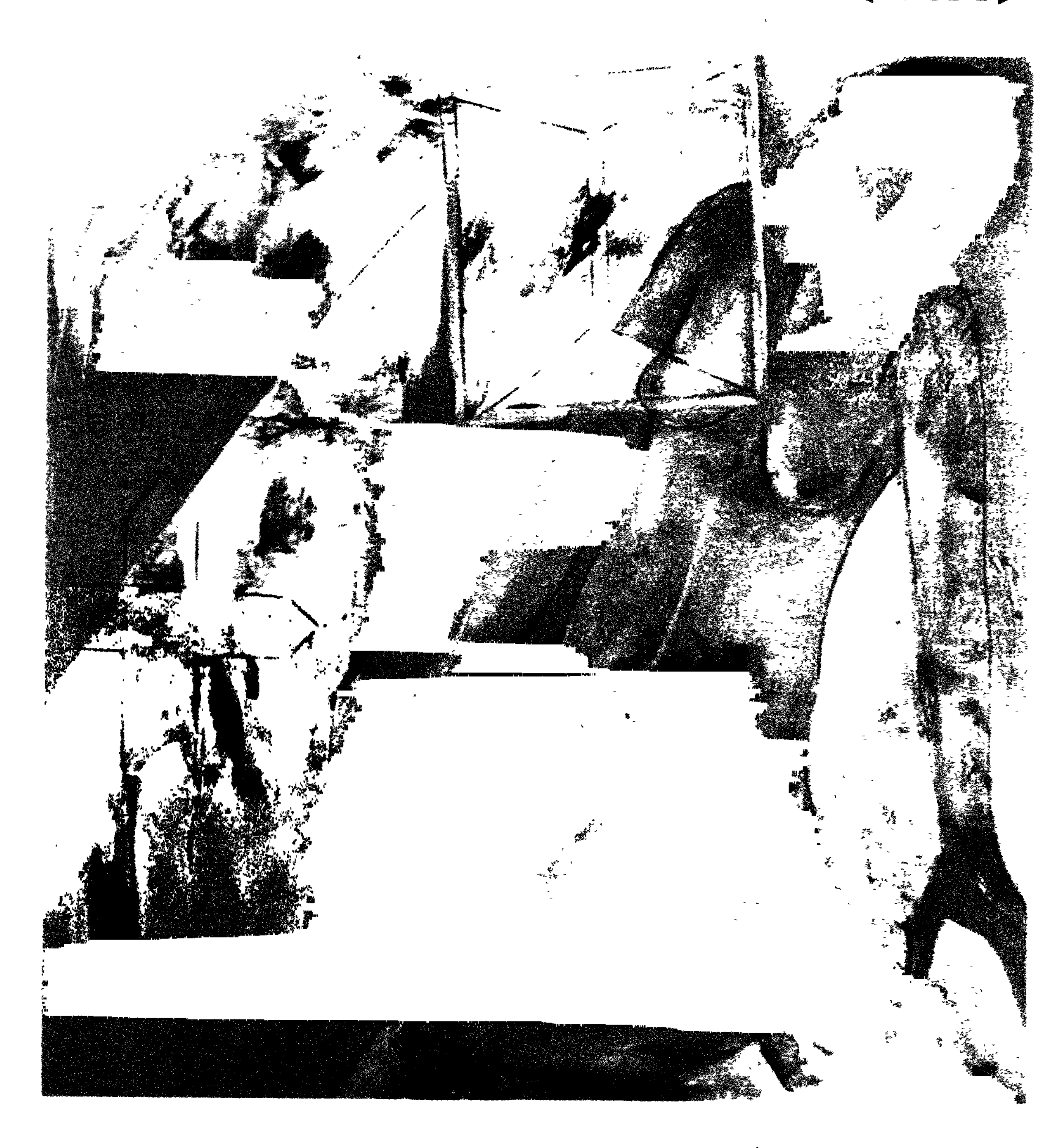
> *My twenty-four year-old-face*
> *has been commandeered*
> *by silver fish.*
> *I cannot believe how the years neatly*
> *cut their lines around our trunks...*

Need one say more!
That *Rain Rising* is an important contribution to Indian writing in English need not be reiterated. For all lovers of literature, this book is an asset and a must read.

Rain Rising Poems

Nirupama Menon Rao

GANDHARI



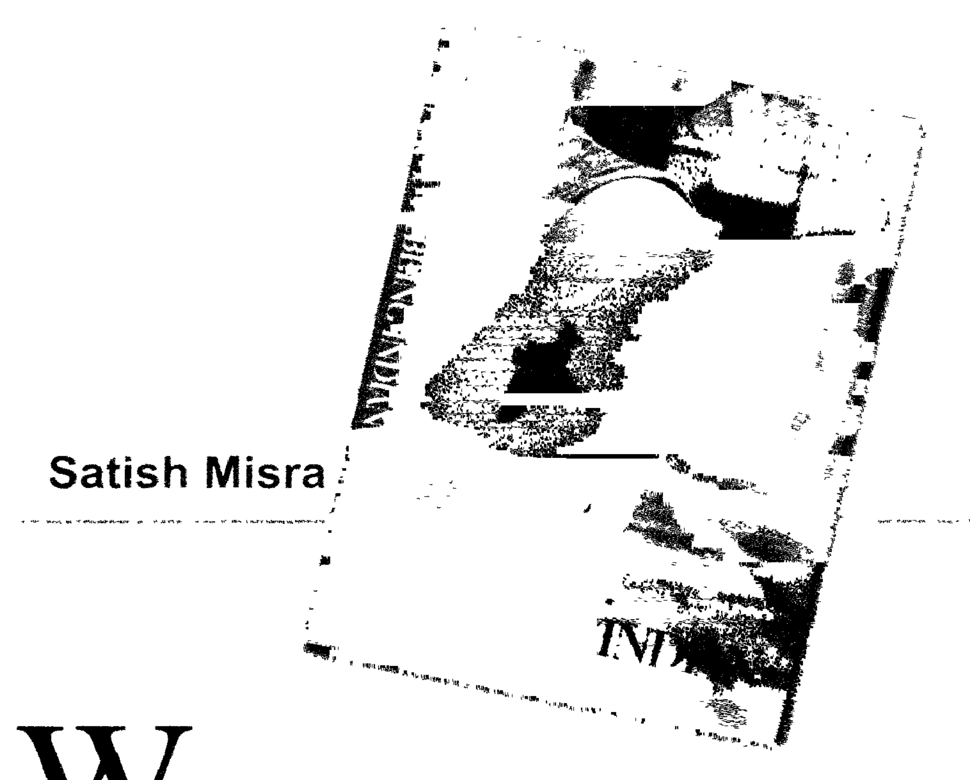
We went to your play
today
where you spoke
Through
the voices of five women
chorused grief
and impotence
drawing shadows
on crimson earth.
You dissected
the cause of war
and
your collaboration in it.
you questioned
your own silence
the stoniness that drew
dry sobs
scattering the gizzards
of carrion in inkpots.
You wished for
a dam of containment
that could see
your children play
and not lie unfeeling
in silent slaughterhouses
that you would admire
the perfection
of their creation
and not wear
this visor
of pulverising grief
emptying your embrace
of all encumbrance,
you are stone,
caked earth
and
pointed, shattered glass.

THARAWAD

Where I came from
this dark room where
grandmother waited
for the deliveries of her myriad
daughters
is swept clean now
and
yields little
by way of memories.
"Why", you ask,
"this search for being
in a shaded house where
the green slime
reaches out of unused wells?"
At the bottom of the hill
there is an older house.
The laterite
pitted, the cobwebs mushy
against my nose and ears.
Where this distant aunt
sits sharing my name,
we have the same eyes,
rather brown,
reflecting each other, but marked
as strangers in this sorrority.
We haven't much
to say to each other actually,
but the meeting
unclenches my soul.



BOOK REVIEW



Being Indian

Pavan K Verma
Viking, Penguin Books of India, New Delhi, pp. 238, Rs 325

Satish Misra

What it is to be an Indian? Many a scholar have undertaken research to answer questions like this for decades now, particularly after India became a sovereign state in 1947.

How come, despite many predictions from western and sometimes native scholar- writers and observers, India and its parliamentary democracy has sustained and survived till today?

The Indian nation state and its over 1 billion inhabitants is not an easily fathomable entity but it may take many a rebirth — as is often popularly said — to comprehend it.

Pavan K Verma, a career diplomat and a keen student of History, has attempted to answer many of these queries which have been haunting many foreign observers and Indians alike for a pretty long time.

Today when India is unmistakably marching ahead to be a major global player, understanding an Indian would definitely be an asset. Verma, with his insightful and penetrating observations, has been able to present a rather cohesive understanding of an Indian and what goes to make him to be what he or she is. In his 200 odd pages, Verma has solved many puzzles, which have challenged the human brains in India and abroad. He has exploded myths, which have been sometimes with design and at other times unknowingly perpetrated and hammered in for couple of centuries particularly since the advent of Christians in India in the last decade of the 15th century.

These untruths and half-truths have multiplied over hundred of years and an overwhelmingly distorted picture of India and Indians has got etched in western as well as non-Indian comprehension.

Explaining, Verma writes about the picture of Indians in foreign perception as they comprehend inhabitants of the ancient nation in "stereotypes". "Foreigners" usually gape or gulp when in India. The sheer range of the auditory and visual experience overwhelms them.

Quoting Edward Said, Verma has driven a point very succinctly when he says that "During the colonial period perceptions were distorted by 'Orientalism' of the West". "The Orient was the unfamiliar 'other', its people the strange 'them' against the known 'us'. For most Englishmen, India provoked broad-brush euphoria or condemnation. The country was seen as irrevocably fragmented or spiritually transcendent, hugely ungovernable or simplistically self-reliant, venal beyond redemption or blissfully unmaterialistic, impossibly opaque or wonderfully ancient and revealing

"In tandem, Indians were incorrigibly or surprisingly diligent, horribly superstitious or remarkably evolved, disgustingly servile or always rebellious, amazingly talented or trans-parently imitative, greatly cultured or despairingly poor and, basically, just far too many."

Indeed, Verma has hit the root of the problem about the foreigner's understanding of Indians and India.

What has really transpired is that a one wrong has got multiplied, enlarged, rather doubled and redoubled in geometrical proportions over hundred of years. One Englishman, so described as a scholar, called Sir William Jones, who landed in India in 1783, is at the root of all understanding or comprehension of the western scholarship of India. His knowledge of Sanskrit and then his translation or rather interpretation of *Vedas* or part of some *Vedas* has created a flawed or miscued image of India and Indians as all Indologists who followed him built the structure of Indology on the foundations that Jones had laid. Sanskrit, an ancient language, which at no point of time was a mass language but was limited to the scholarship of a privileged few who painstakingly learnt and mastered it over a period of nothing less than 6 to 10 years.



Sir Williams claimed to have mastered Sanskrit in a short period without having been to any known 'Guru' and went on to set up the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1784 within a year of his arrival. He claimed to have a knowledge of 32 languages including that of Persian and with the help of Persian, he was able to come through in Calcutta. Till then, he had not known a single word of Sanskrit. During his stay in India, he met Charles Wilkins, who had a knowledge of Indian languages. Wilkins had arrived in India in 1770. But surprisingly, in 1783, he informs Jones that he knew Indian languages but there was no mention of Sanskrit. Incidentally, Wilkins also had a printing press.

Meanwhile, Sir Williams started lectures over Asian themes at the Asiatic Society of Bengal and he invited all those who matter. Lectures and the following discussions were printed and circulated in United Kingdom.

A translation of *Bhagvad Gita* by Wilkins with a foreword of Governor General William Hastings is brought out. *Gita* may have been translated from one of the Indian languages but this does not offer any evidence that either Wilkins or Jones had any knowledge of Sanskrit.

Till 1784, Sir Williams in his own admission did not know Sanskrit at all. In 1784 itself, he wrote a piece on 'The Gods of Greece, Italy and India." In a very short time, Sir Williams acquired the status of being an expert on Indian culture.

Amazing indeed! In brief, there are many like Sir Williams who spoke and wrote untruths and half truths about India and Indians.

So a falsified picture of Indians gets spread in the world by these so called experts who either had no comprehension of the country and its inhabitants. Understanding or comprehension of India and Indians remained elusive as such scholars tried to interpret the country and its people through their own limited parameters and myopic vision which did not provide any effective tools.

Since, a majority of these foreign scholars were Christians, they told the world that the way of life in this sub-continent was nothing but a religion.

Verma has tried to clear a lot of these misconceptions and explode such myths as he, in his brutally frank understanding, describes the strengths and weaknesses of Indians.

"The mistake one should never make is to accept the amiable Indian as a monolith. He is a most well adjusted split personality, capable of living simultaneously and effortlessly on two mutually opposed planes. He can make a quantum leap from one epoch to another without showing any strain. His mind is like a chest of drawers- never a single cupboard; each drawer can be a world unto itself and can be pulled out, without reference to other, in response to a given situation. If the moment demands working the keyboard of a computer, a certain drawer will open to cope with the task at hand. But in the very next instant another drawer could open in response to a tradition that goes back thousands of years before the computer was invented. In the space of parallel domains, tradition and technology do meet, but in typically Indian ways." Verma goes on to paint an Indian who is determined to go ahead, overcoming all hurdles.

And he is not shy to admit that this ability to assimilate the two contradictory trends in oneself by compartmentalizing the mind is "both a weakness and a strength." In categorical terms, Verma, without prejudices or national pride, tells his readers that "An Indian is never faced with the choice of either or. His feet can be planted in the irrationalities of the past even as his hands mould competently the future of technology." The tale of the success of Indian democracy is narrated and explained in candid words, which may be accepted or rejected by many. "The truth is that democracy has survived in India not because Indians are democratic, but because democracy has proved to be the most effective instrument for the cherished pursuit of power," says the author whose canny sense of observation may hurt sensibilities but then the truth always acts like that. He goes on to say that "Democracy did not adopt India" rather "Indians usurped democracy because it could be moulded to fit earlier structures without threatening them. It caught the popular imagination not for the new value it symbolized, but for the possibilities it opened for the consolidation of the old. The miracle of India is that the practice of democracy has flourished within its boundaries for over five decades in the absence of democratic temperament."

Verma does not hesitate to answer, saying that "They are past masters of in the art of compromise, in stepping back from the precipice, in forging a *modus vivendi* that obviates the need to choose between extremes, and in finding solutions that accommodate conflicting interests."

"Democracy in India has finally found a lasting home because of what Indian people are, and not because of what they should have been, or presume themselves to be," is a befitting reply to all those who take moral positions.

With his candid style and minute observation, Verma makes an interesting and revealing reading as he succeeds in unravelling many a query.

■

BOOK REVIEW

Perfumed Phrases in a Gloomy Air

Rajiv Banerji



THE LAST SONG OF DUSK

SIDDHARTH DHANVANT SHANGHVI
Viking, Penguin Books of India, New Delhi, pp. 238, Rs 325

The recent success of several Indian writers in English has obviously inspired many more to take up the vocation of fiction writing. Indian publishing houses too have become adventurous enough to embrace new authors and give them an opportunity to communicate their vision and oeuvre across an audience that is increasingly discriminating as well as increasingly international. As a result, there has been a veritable deluge of writers and books on the literary landscape, with all competing for the reader's attention and-in Vikram Seth's memorable phrase-his purse.

Unfortunately, it appears that there are more writers than stories, more novels than characters! The basic grammar or the primordial *raga* of most novels appears to be like this: a well-settled boy with bright prospects: a girl, usually with a sweet disposition, of marriageable age; boy meets girl, sometimes by chance, but mostly by some familial contrivance: they fall in love, get married and look forward to living happily thereafter; but then falls the shadow on their blissful domesticity-usually some social or family calamity-and they grow apart; but their love remains intact and they eventually make up and live caringly thereafter.

Within this general topography of human endeavour, it is the variations-the paths treaded and avoided, the new paths constructed-that signal the writer's talent and imagination. It is the overall layout, the nature and colour of the topography itself as a whole, that signifies the writer's vision. And the writer in question, Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi in his debut novel *The Last Song of Dusk* reveals talent and vision. But it is a bleak vision which has pierced the author's intellect, captured his imagination and limited his view of the topography of the human condition and its endless possibilities. A vision of loss unredeemed by hope; of sorrow mitigated only partially by a weary wisdom: of love denied, unexpressed and suppressed.

It is this vision which poisons Shanghvi's characters, shrivels their development and eventually reduces them to ghostly embodiments of sorrow and fortitude. Thus Vardhamaan, devastated by the loss of his son and perhaps by his second failure to save a loved one (though this is never spelt out in the narrative), remains devastated throughout, withdraws into himself, ceases to communicate with his wife Anuradha and becomes a daily stranger to his second son Shloka. Anuradha recovers



shakily from the loss, is bewildered by her husband's stoic withdrawal but does not really try to reach out to him, to make him open out and find release. Instead she finds some solace in her Song, in her dying friend Pallavi and in Shloka. Though both husband and wife are tied to each other through shared memories and loss, neither really confronts the other's angst.

While most other characters flit across the story like ghosts floating on the waters of gloom and despair, Nandini and her Irish friend Sherman momentarily break free, hurriedly display some vitality and just as quickly fade out from the story. Perhaps they would have taken the story in a different direction and therefore did not fit in with Shanghvi's design of the narrative. Sherman is entirely credible and is even endearingly sketched. Nandini is entirely the opposite and we wonder whether the auther created her as a person or as a symbol of some mythical mystery.

The book does have unresolved mysteries-why, for instance, did Vardhaman wait for a week before proposing to Anuradha; why did the stepmother Diva-bai flee from her house when Vardhaman announced his decision to marry and therby allowed free reign of the house to Anuradha; did the prowling panther mate with Nandini, not once but twice; how did little Shloka suddenly find speech and begin talking like a grown-up?

Though minor, these are still flaws in Shanghvi's craft. The other problem is with the setting. The story is set in early twentieth century in the backdrop of the British Raj. However, the period is merely mentioned and never described or evoked; no attempt is made to integrate it with the story. One wonders why the period was mentioned at all? The story might as well have been set anywhere, anytime, since it is not related to any specific social milieu.

In spite of these aberrations, the book holds the reader's interest. Shanghvi's prose is generally smart and free-flowing. Occasionally, however, there are stilted expressions or 'perfumed phrases' and this usually happens when a striking phrase is inserted for its own sake and not in relation to the context.

These occasional glitches do not detract from the merits of the book: Shanghvi's engaging style; his obvious skill in narration, as evidenced in the tale of the Kite; his ability to create atmosphere (the forbidding and sinister Dariya Mahal stands out as a striking example) and his poise in portraying poignant and dramatic situations. These merits along with a broad, holistic vision and credible flesh-and-blood characters would have made the book more compelling and enjoyable.

Pick of the Crop from Asian Cinema

Latika Padgaonkar

Two films - *Earth and Ashes* (an Afghanistan-France co-production) and *The Missing* (Taiwan) – walked off with the honours at the recently-concluded Osian's-Cinefan Film Festival in New Delhi. *Earth and Ashes*, a work of subtlety and great visual power and set in a desolate Afghan landscape, showed the havoc wreaked by war on the mind of an old man; and *The Missing*, located in an indifferent metropolis, focused tightly on the desperate search for two people who go missing on the same day. Two very different films, two faces of a callous world that has no time or room for the small personal drama or the individual torment.

For six years, Osian's-Cinefan has worked assiduously to build an audience for Asian films in the capital. Too little is known of these cinemas, works that are apertures to societies and cultures, to their problems and preoccupations. The 90 films from more than 30 countries screened at the Festival were heart-and-mind-openers as much to the artistic grace of their creators as to the moral dilemmas they grapple with.

The Festival paid tribute to three exceptional men of cinema: Guru Dutt (the 40th death anniversary of this haunting and romantic director in being observed this year), with a package of seven films from *Baazi* to *Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam* which he either directed or produced or in which he starred; the Makhmalbaf family from Iran, surely one of the most unusual in



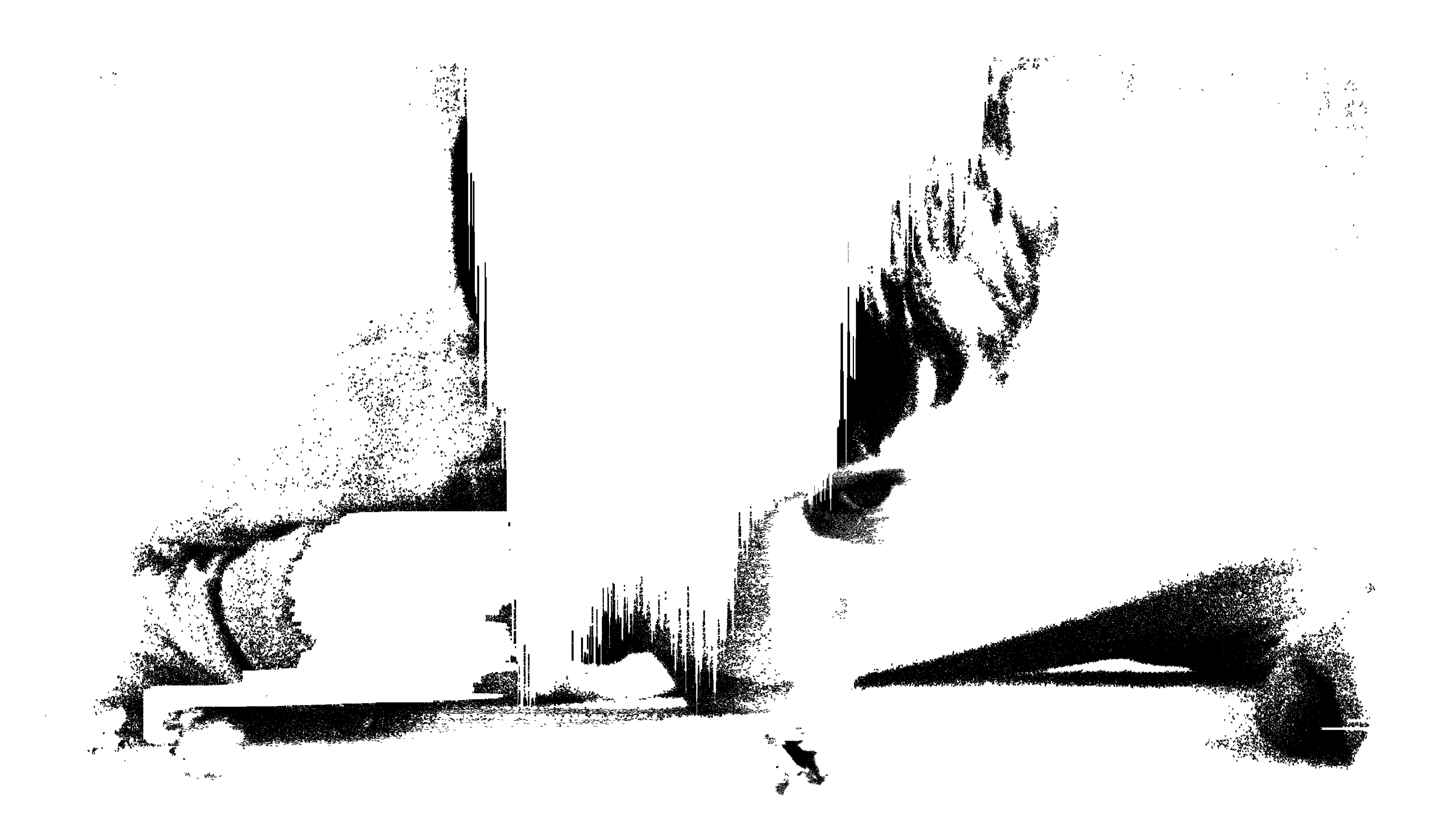


the annals of filmmaking: Mohsen, wife Marzieh, and children Samira, Maysam and Hana are all filmmakers of renown. Mohsen, some of whose films have been banned in Iran, and who has shown constant concern for the oppression of women and the Kurds, is an award-winning and influential if controversial filmmaker; and Wong Kar-Wai from Hong Kong whose "images of modern living, urban alienation and forlorn love," as one critic put it, are set in a "dazzling, intimate poetic and fragmented formal register." If serpentine queues are any indication, Wong Kar-Wai's was, for Delhi-ites, the great discovery of the festival.

Exceptionally, the Festival showcased a package of films from the Arab world (Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt) where cinema has been in a state of crisis, filmmakers have been forced to migrate and production has plummeted, including in Egypt, the one-time cinema monarch of this region. Yet, the handful of films produced in this region are artistic gems. Some grapple with urgent contemporary themes : an out-of-wedlock pregnancy in an Islamic society in *A Girl's Secret* (Egypt); Islamic terrorism and the status of women in *Rachida* (Algeria); troubles aplenty in the lives of married and unmarried couples in *Staying Awake at Night* (Egypt); the efforts of a man to take a mobile cinema unit to children in a refugee camp near Ramallah in *Ticket to Jerusalem* (Palestine). And it was an Syrian film - *Listener's Choice* - on love, friendship and listening to radio broadcasts about news and favourite programmes by director Abdullatif Abdulhamid which won the NETPAC (Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema) award.

In an unprecedented move, the Festival instituted a Lifetime Achievement Award for Writing on Cinema. The inaugural prize was conferred on scholar-critic-writer-director Chidananda Das Gupta, founder of the Calcutta Film Society and an architect of the Federation of Film Societies. Das Gupta remains one of the earliest writers to give serious form and expression to film criticism. He has a keen eye, an eloquent pen, a sure sense of cinema history, an





ability to place a film in the context of Indian history and an astute and humane understanding of his subject.

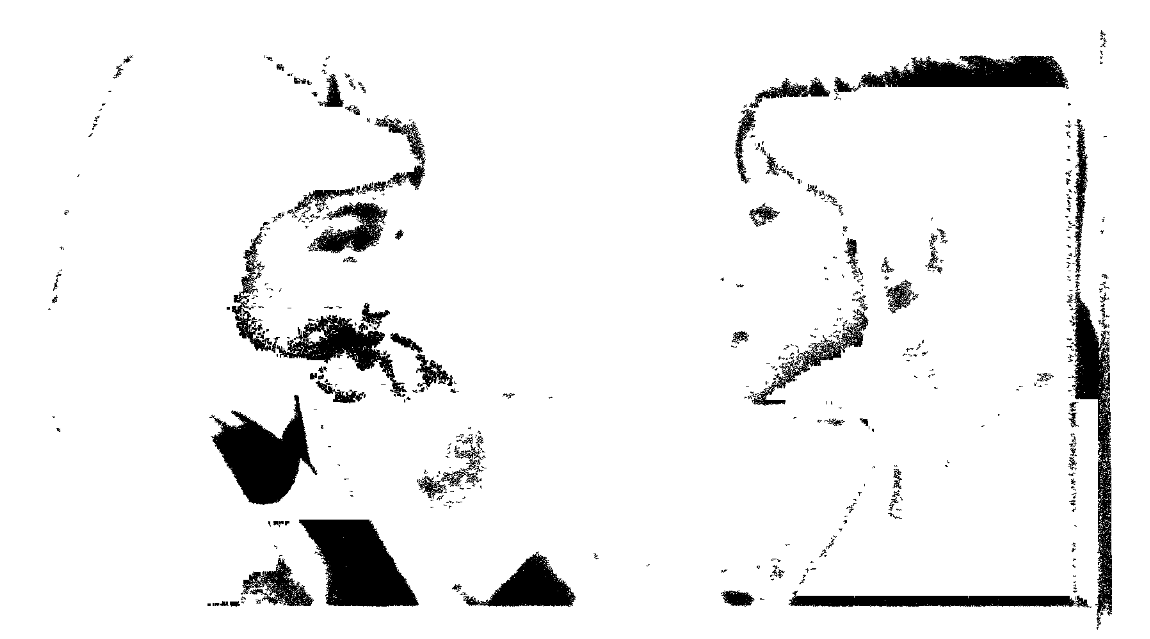
A special section comprising three long documentaries reflected on the intolerance of our times: from France came Rithy Panh's *S21 The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*, a spine-chilling account of Pol Pot's killing fields, bringing together, in an extraordinary move, victim and torturer for the first time. Rithy Panh, a Cambodian now living in France, reconstructs and reflects on a genocide that rent his country a quarter of a century ago; *Forget Baghdad*, structured as moving reflections on the personal and national destiny of Jewish intellectuals from Iraq who fled their country and relocated to Israel following anti-Jewish pogroms in the 1940s; and Rakesh Sharma's *Final Solution*, a heart-rending work on the aftermath of the Gujarat violence and on the politics of hate.

For more than thirty years, the Hubert Bals Fund of the International Film Festival of Rotterdam has been promoting innovative, alternative, non-commercial cinema through the catalytic help it provides to talented filmmakers from Asia, Africa and Latin America for research/script-writing and post-production. Osian's-Cinefan showcased ten Asian (including three Indian) films which have received such support. Pakistani director Sabiha Sumar's *Khamosh Pani*, starring Kirron Kher (who had won an international award for her role) a cross-border story set in the present but harking back to Partition and its fallout, saw a near-stampede outside the auditorium. Meanwhile, Kurdish-American director Jano Rosebiani's *Life* (Jiyan) described life in Halabja in northern Iraq five years after the infamous chemical bombing by Saddam Hussain in which hundreds died and several hundreds were scarred for life. Tahmineh Milani's *The Fifth Reaction* takes up cudgels on behalf of Iranian women who try to assert themselves in a society which denies them their rights and identity.

Thirteen new films from as many countries competed for the three awards. The distinguished jury - headed by Shabana Azmi - and comprising Aparna Sen, Kim Dong-ho (director of the Pusan International Film Festival), Amable 'Tikoy' Aguiluz (director of the Cinemanila Film Festival), Mohsen Makhmalbaf, eminent Syrian filmmaker Oussama Mohammad and Olivier Pere (Director of the Director's Fortnight at Cannes) honoured Abdul Ghani with the Best Actor award for his stunning portrayal of anguish and restraint in *Earth and Ashes*, and the young Katherine Luna from the Philippines with the Best Actress award for the "innocence and energy" she brought to the "poignant portrayal of a marginalised character in a violent and dehumanised society."

Travellers and Magicians in the Asian Frescoes section was unusual in more ways than one: it is the first film to come out of Bhutan and its creator, Khyentse Norbu, is a monk although this is not his first film. Among the 17 films screened in this section, Kim Ki-duk's *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring* (Korea) was an lyrical movement through the seasons and through man's life; while *Ben's Biography* directed by Dan Wolman (Israel) brought delicate and sensitive touch to the problem of child abuse. East-West Encounters had films made by Asians and non-Asians alike, frequently throwing up the collisions and confusions that arise when east meets – or resists – west. India Bazaar was showcased the latest, yet-to-be released works from India: Sandip Ray's *Gangsters of Bombay* (it won the





Audience award), Roysten Abel's *In Othello* and Nachiket and Jayoo Patwardhan's *Devi Ahilyabai* among others.

And now the major bonus. In collaboration with the Berlin International Film Festival and the Max Mueller Bhavan the Festival put together a major sidebar: Talent Campus. Fifty young talented and aspiring filmmakers from all parts of India got an opportunity to interact intensively over four days with renowned directors (Makhmalbaf, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Aparna Sen, Andres Veiel from Germany, Emily Young from Britain), cinematographers (the legendary Christopher Doyle), editors (Bina Paul) on a variety of subjects ranging from script-writing, directing and acting to the documentary film and the digital format – the joy of teaching and learning with some of the best minds in cinema. Another sidebar was a one-day Round Table with festival directors and distributors from India and Europe on how best to promote Indian cinema in Europe and European cinema in India.

What was Cinefan until last year, is Osian's-Cinefan today. The festival, nurtured by Aruna Vasudev for five years and born out of *Cinemaya The Asian Film Quarterly* which she has run for sixteen years, has merged with Osian's Connoisseurs of Art headed by Neville Tuli, to become larger and more ambitious. What the selection of films did prove, though, was that Asian cinema today is vibrant, original, serious and attractive. It marries warmth with substance, stuff with style; it is purposeful, socially conscious, experimental, lyrical. It has only one crying demand: to be seen and appreciated.

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ICCR PUBLICATIONS AND MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS

The Council has an ambitious publication programme which has grown over the years. The Council brings out six quarterly journals in five different languages viz, *Indian Horizons* and *Africa Quarterly* (both in English), *Gagananchal* (Hindi), *Papeles de la India* (Spanish), *Rencontre Avec l' Inde* (French) and *Thaqafat-ul-Hind* (Arabic).

In addition, over the years, the Council has published books on a wide range of subjects, ranging from the arts to philosophy, diplomacy, language and literature. Works of eminent Indian men of letters, statesmen and philosophers like Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, Nehru and Tagore, among others, hold pride of place in ICCR's Publication Programme. The Programme is focussed particularly on books relating to Indian Culture, Philosophy and Mythology, Music, Dance, Theatre, and includes translations of Sanskrit classics in a number of languages including French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and English. The Council has also facilitated translations of seminal World Literature in to Hindi, English and other Indian languages.

The Council has also initiated a programme of producing DVDs, VCDs and CDs on Indian Dance and Music. In an innovative effort, the Council has embarked on a joint production with Doordarshan India, of a set of discs and audio cassettes on *Celebration of 100 years of Recorded Music.*

